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Feature Story

## NAED'S ARTHUR W. HOOPER AWARD RECIPIENT **GEORGE VORWICK**

PRESIDENT & CEO,  
UNITED ELECTRIC SUPPLY

pg.40





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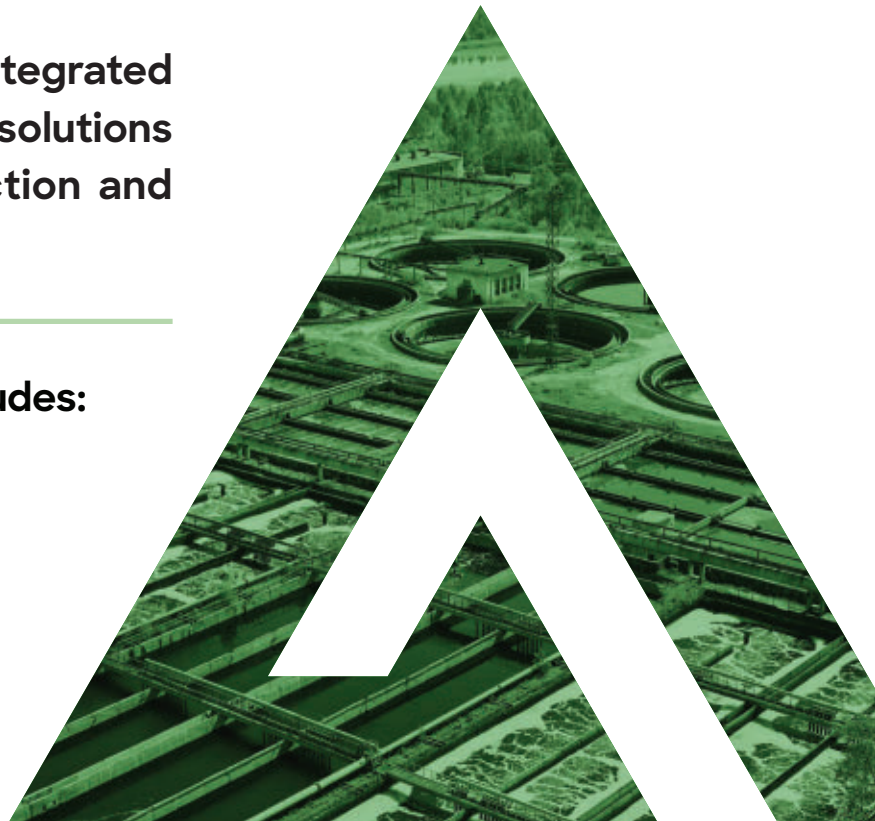


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# A PATH TO DIGITAL EXCELLENCE

by Wes Smith

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CURRENT

/ QUARTERLY OUTLOOK

# CONSTRUCTION MARKETS DIVERGE

by Ken Simonson



**W**ILL DISTRIBUTORS THAT SERVE CONSTRUCTION soon be saying, “2023—ah, yes, the good, not-so-old days”? The answer increasingly depends on what region and customer base they are looking at.

The good times are still rolling, albeit with a few bumps in the road, for some end-markets. But others seem to have hit the brakes.

In 2023 as a whole, construction spending put in place increased 7% compared with the 2022 total, the Census Bureau reported on April 1. Nonresidential spending jumped 20%, as did spending on multifamily housing. Remarkably, all 16 nonresidential categories that the bureau includes in its press release posted gains. And growth was nearly balanced between spending on private structures, which soared 22%, and public projects, which climbed 17%.

By February, growth rates had decelerated noticeably. Multifamily construction was still up from a year earlier, but by only 6%, not 20%. Public spending had not slack-

ened, but private nonresidential spending growth had tapered off to a 14% year-over-year increase instead of 22%. In particular, warehouse construction went from a 6% increase in 2023 as a whole to a 3% decline in the February-to-February period.

Despite these slowdowns, total construction spending accelerated to 11% year-over-year growth in February from 7% for 2023 as a whole. The secret? Single-family home construction leaped 17% in the latest 12 months, after tumbling 13% in 2023. In fact, by February, homebuilding had been rising for 10 months in a row.

Homebuilding appears poised to continue its growth spurt for the rest of 2024. A separate Census report showed that the number of single-family houses started in the first two months of the year combined catapulted 28% from a year earlier. Over the same intervals, the number of permits—a reliable indicator of near-term future single-family starts—jumped 38%.

But starts and permits data are pointing in the opposite direction for multifamily construction. Starts (for buildings

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with five or more units) plummeted 36% year to date in the first two months of 2024 compared with January and February 2023, while permits shrank by 25%.

Single-family homebuilders have made homebuying more affordable by reducing the average size of new houses, cutting prices, and subsidizing interest costs. On the demand side, more households have sufficient equity from existing homes, stock market wealth, or other means to buy homes for cash or at least put in a large enough downpayment to make their monthly payments affordable.

In contrast, apartment developers are being hit with higher construction and financing costs, tighter bank lending standards, and flat or falling rents as huge numbers of newly completed buildings compete for tenants. Stubbornly long lead times for key electrical equipment such as transformers and switchgear add to carrying costs and delay the start of collecting rental income. This toxic combination of factors is likely to drive down multifamily construction through the rest of 2024 and probably beyond.

### Manufacturing and Data Centers

Two categories that did extremely well in 2023 appear poised to continue growing at double-digit rates: manufacturing and data centers.

Manufacturing construction spending jumped 34% year to date from the first two months of 2023. In March, the Biden administration announced tentative grants of several billion dollars toward construction of semiconductor plants in a variety of states, with the expectation that more awards would be announced shortly. EV and battery manufacturers are continuing to erect multi-billion-dollar factories, despite a few that have been delayed or scaled back. Other manufacturers are relocating or opening plants in the United States, to reduce either exposure to actual and potential conflict regions or shipping disruptions. And

requirements that recipients of federal funding for construction use U.S.-made construction materials and manufactured goods are spurring additional factory projects.

While the Census Bureau doesn't post figures on data center construction spending, that is changing. The agency announced in April that it will begin reporting those numbers in July. Meanwhile, the appetite for data center capacity seems limitless as evermore firms enter the market for AI and cryptocurrencies grow in popularity.

### Infrastructure and Renewable Energy

In addition to these segments, growth prospects appear positive for several types of infrastructure and renewable energy construction. However, the timing of actual project awards and placement of orders for electrical gear remain uncertain.

Congress passed the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)* in November 2021 and the *CHIPS and Science Act* and *Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)* in August 2022. The three laws collectively direct unprecedented amounts of federal grants, subsidies, and tax credits to a wide range of project types. But, in many cases, the agencies charged with distributing or overseeing the funding have taken a long time to put in place the requisite procedures and personnel. In addition, the laws add significant requirements and restrictions regarding U.S.-manufactured materials, apprenticeships, and more.

Many of the federal announcements of project "awards" only open the door for eligible parties to submit applications. Or they are tentative designations of the recipient that must be followed by detailed stipula-

tions regarding how the funds will be spent. After a state or local agency wins an amount for a specific project, the agency must usually take additional steps to design the project, perform environmental and other reviews, allow public comment, and advertise the availability of funds before finally giving a contractor the go-ahead to begin work.

These factors help explain why the funds have seemed very slow to turn into orders and why the timing remains unclear.

Nevertheless, more projects are expected to show up in the spending data over the course of the year.

Highway and street spending accelerated from an already hot 18% increase to 25% year to date in the first two months of 2024, despite atmospheric rivers in

California and other weather conditions that were extremely unfavorable to outdoor construction. Water and wastewater projects have received a twofold boost, first from an increase in existing state revolving funds and then from grants to municipal agencies to deal with specific local water quality issues.

A buildout of broadband Internet infrastructure is underway to locations with limited or no service. Airport expansions and modernizations are occurring around the country. And major investments are getting started in railway tunnel, bridge, and station upgrades.

For renewable energy and related infrastructure, "developers and power plant owners plan to add 62.8GW of new utility-scale electric-generating capacity in 2024," the Energy Information Administration (EIA) reported in February. "This addition would be



**There should be substantial opportunities for electrical distributors across a variety of states and construction markets, from single-family houses to giant manufacturing, infrastructure, and power projects.**

55% more added capacity than the 40.4GW added in 2023 (the most since 2003) and points to a continued rise in industry activity. We expect solar to account for the largest share of new capacity in 2024, at 58%, followed by battery storage, at 23%.

“We expect a record addition of utility-scale solar in 2024 if the scheduled 36.4GW are added to the grid,” the report continued. “This growth would almost double last year’s 18.4GW increase, which was itself a record for annual utility-scale solar installation in the United States.”

The agency expects most solar construction to occur in four states, mainly “Texas (35%), California (10%), and Florida (6%). Outside of these states, the Gemini solar facility in Nevada plans to begin operating in 2024 [and] is expected to be the largest solar project in the United States when fully operational.”

In addition, continuing its report, the EIA expects “battery storage to set a record for annual capacity additions in 2024. We expect U.S. battery storage capacity to nearly double in 2024 as developers report plans to add 14.3GW of battery storage to the existing 15.5GW this year. In 2023, 6.4GW of new battery storage capacity was added to the U.S. grid, a 70% annual increase.” The agency identified “Texas, with an expected 6.4GW, and California, with an expected 5GW, [as accounting] for 82% of the new U.S. battery storage capacity.”

In short, there should be substantial opportunities for electrical distributors across a variety of states and construction markets, from single-family houses to giant manufacturing, infrastructure, and power projects. But demand will shrink substantially from multifamily, warehouse, and office projects. ■

**Simonson** is chief economist for the Associated General Contractors of America. He can be reached at [solomonsimonson@gmail.com](mailto:solomonsimonson@gmail.com).



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# TAKING CHARGE

**Thanks to expertise from Facilities Solutions Group, a residential developer can move forward with a robust EV charging spec across all of its mid-Atlantic communities.**

by **Susan Bloom**

**F**OUNDED MORE THAN 30 years ago and headquartered in Collingswood, N.J., Ingerman is a multifamily unit developer, contractor, and property manager that's created more than 100 affordable and market-rate residential communities across Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Focused on providing amenities and aware of the growing number of people who own EVs, Ingerman recently sought to identify and install a reliable EV charging system at its new View 22 development in Clinton, N.J.

## A "Ground Zero" Installation

"New Jersey now requires any new developments that are constructed to have the infrastructure or capacity planning in place for a certain number of EV charging stations," said Kevin Myers, Ingerman's vice president of IT. "But at Ingerman, we're also all about amenities, so it made sense for us to install EV chargers anyway. Given that our new 120-unit 'View 22' community was set to open in summer 2023, we reached out to the team at Facility Solutions Group (FSG) in late 2022 to start getting estimates on EV charging systems."

Based on his experience with the technology, Matthew Jurusz, account manager at FSG's branch in Manalapan, N.J., confirmed that residential communities and businesses can approach their provision of EV charging capabilities as an amenity, a revenue stream, or both.

"EV charging capabilities are

among the first things many younger and/or environmentally conscious tenants look for when evaluating between residential communities," Jurusz noted of a reality that's contributed to the record sales of 1.2 million EVs in the United States in 2023, a 31% growth over the prior year.

Regardless of this rapidly growing demand, however, "there's hardware, software, contractors, installation, and incentives involved in the identification and installation of EV charging systems, so there are a lot of moving parts in the mix," he said.

Following numerous discussions with Myers, "Ingerman's goal was to establish a company spec for the charger hardware and software for use across its various locations as those needs arise," Jurusz said. "They wanted reliable, high-quality equipment that would last a long time, along with user-friendly software that would enable them to see analytics on the usage of and revenue generated by chargers at each



local site as well as a broader view of charger usage and revenue at all of their sites in total to enable their most informed decision-making.”

With the View 22 community serving as Ingerman’s first site for EV charger installations and a template for other installations in the future, Jurusz recognized the importance of getting the system just right.

“After evaluating a number of different options, I determined that the fully compatible system of a Level 2 Zerova charging station with EV Connect software would best meet Ingerman’s needs,” Jurusz said. “In addition to offering solidly designed, IP56/NEMA 4-rated charging stations that were built to last as well as the option of both WiFi and cellular

service, I liked the support that these two companies provide if there are any issues. Responsiveness is key because some utility and state incentives require a 97% uptime, so these customer systems can’t be down,” he said.

After Ingerman’s electrician installed the three dual-charging stations (six in total—two for resident use and the remaining four available to residents, visitors, or the general public for a fee through an EV charging app) last summer, “I personally commissioned them to get them up and running and then the Ingerman team arranged a webinar to train their property manager at View 22 on how to use the system and review the daily analytics it shared through the system’s dashboard,” Jurusz said.

“While every apartment complex in our portfolio is its own legal entity/cost center and we need to be able to derive information specific to each complex, we also need to be able to evaluate performance and costs on a company-wide basis to continually fine-tune our operations,” Myers explained. To that end, “our new EV charging system has a great dashboard that shows hours of charging, revenue earned from that activity, and more.

“It’s an amenity, but it also drives some cash flow that we’ve already been able to see,” Myers continued. “So far, it’s been ‘set it and forget it’—the stations are getting used and we’ve had no issues with them. It’s a great system that supports our residents’ needs while also giving our community an edge over competing developments.”

“All of the analytics are right there, and Ingerman gets to enjoy a direct deposit to their account from the revenue,” Jurusz added. “With an incentive, these projects can see a payback of three to four years, and over time they’ll drive an additional revenue stream that property owners can plan for.”

## Peace of Mind

Based on their comfort with their new EV charging system, Ingerman plans to replicate these installations at all of the new construction developments they’re planning to open in the future and to extend them to their existing facilities as those opportunities arise—and are grateful to FSG and Jurusz for their expertise and support.

“Matt [Jurusz] offered a number of different options, helped us evaluate them, advised us on all of the utility and state rebates available on this system, and ultimately hit a home run for us,” Myers said. “He was extremely responsive and gave us the information we needed to make an informed business decision and move forward with a single source of contact.”

For his part, “I love helping customers get new technology and save energy,” said Jurusz. “Projects like these can also help build relationships that open doors to lighting and other electrical projects. These days, customers are all thinking about, talking about, preparing for, or completing EV charger installations, and being knowledgeable about EV charging technology is another tool in our arsenal that we can offer customers. It feels great to have given Kevin and Ingerman peace of mind that they have a solid EV charger plan, know exactly what they’re getting, and can expand it to their whole portfolio.”

“This was a successful project, and we definitely encourage other developers to invest in EV chargers as a way to differentiate their communities,” Myers advised. “But in the end, it’s also important to find a good partner like FSG. As property developers and managers, we’re not in the EV charger business, and we wouldn’t have been able to do it without them.” ■

*Bloom is a freelance writer/consultant who has spent 25 years covering the lighting and electrical products industry. Reach her at [susan.bloom.chester@gmail.com](mailto:susan.bloom.chester@gmail.com).*



Ingerman's View 22 community serves as its first site for EV charger installations and a template for future installations.

IMAGE COURTESY OF INGERMAN





## FROM SKU TO PIN?

**Manufacturers express concern about proposed inventory switch.**

*by Joe Nowlan*

**W**HEN THE INFLATION REDUCTION ACT (IRA) WAS PASSED TWO YEARS ago, its goals of improving the climate while conserving energy were praised nationwide. Also applauded were the potential tax credits emerging from the legislation, not only by consumers, but also by manufacturers and distributors in the electrical industries.

But a few unforeseen potential snags have since surfaced—one of which involves the products categorized as “enabling technologies.”

Many electrical manufacturers produce these products, which include branch

circuits, some panelboards, subpanelboards, and more.

However, instead of the commonly used stock keeping units (SKU) inventory system, the Internal Revenue Service initially proposed that a product identification number (PIN) be applied to virtually all products, large or small, to record and verify that the products qualify for these tax credits.

As a result, if the proposed PIN system is used instead of the preferred and far more common SKU system, many electrical manufacturers would not be in compliance.

“This system that’s been proposed to decide whether certain equipment is eligible for the tax credit could cause huge compliance costs and could cause huge implementation problems,” explained Palmer Schoening, chairman of the Family Business Coalition.

The products for which the manufacturers would have to totally reconfigure their inventory systems (primarily the “enabling technologies”) actually carry a lesser tax savings in comparison with the larger appliances such as heat pumps, among others, Schoening explained.

“In those cases, the tax credit would be minimal, [perhaps] \$500 to \$1,000,” Schoening said. “But to install a heat pump, we could be talking \$10,000. A lot of the manufacturers specialize in those [enabling technology] products. If they have to label all of those small dollar products with PINs, it just becomes a huge pain. They’re hoping to have those exempt from these PIN requirements.”

No one disagrees that for that tax break to succeed, it must be applied fairly and accurately. But for decades, manufacturers and distributors have used SKUs as the preferred form of product identification in their warehouses.

The negative impact on the overall electrical supply chain was em-

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phasized by Ed Orlet, NAED senior vice president of government affairs and strategic projects.

“Requiring a novel PIN system would have negative supply chain effects on distributors,” explained Orlet. “Electrical distributors’ role in complying with regulations is often overlooked by policymakers. One of the greatest supply chain challenges distributors face is access to accurate and timely product information from manufacturers. Further complicating this issue will make our supply chain less efficient at a time when we need to do our part in the decarbonization of the U.S. economy.”

Many parties in the industry have already voiced concerns about the potential costs and unavoidable price increases that could result from hav-

ing to install new inventory systems.

In addition, the length of time needed for producing the enabling technologies will also increase.

“I’m thinking about some of these huge warehouses and how much product is in there and the amount of equipment that these manufacturers are taking off the assembly line every day,” Schoening noted. “If you have a new regulation in place that affects almost all of your equipment coming off the assembly line, I as-



***One of the greatest supply chain challenges distributors face is access to accurate and timely product information from manufacturers. Further complicating this issue will make our supply chain less efficient at a time when we need to do our part in the decarbonization of the U.S. economy.***

—ED ORLET,  
NAED

sume on the back end they’re going to have to make some huge changes in terms of software and in terms of tracking all of that.”

A somewhat obvious question, looking back now, is why couldn’t this have been anticipated during the writing, debating, and voting of the IRA?

While it may seem that this is a problem that could have been anticipated and addressed, Schoening is more philosophical about things, owing to how legislation is written and passed in Washington.



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“Across all industries there are issues that are very similar to this in terms of how they are implementing this law. It’s something that nobody could have seen coming because of the pace at which [Congress] did this,”

Schoening said. “Basically when they pass these huge laws, there are always questions about the details of how they will be implemented.”

Since this problem arose, however, the U.S. Treasury Department and the

Internal Revenue Service have requested feedback and information from the electrical industries that would be impacted by the proposed PIN rules on how best to implement the necessary inventory regulations.

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## Buy Better

Strategic ways distributors and contractors can work to reduce the number of POs.

**T**O BETTER HELP ELECTRICAL distributors respond to the needs of electrical contractors, Josh Bone, executive director of ELECTRI International—The Foundation for Electrical Construction, discusses contractors and the state of their digital connectivity:

**Q. Do fewer POs benefit distributors and contractors alike, and if so, how can they work together to achieve this?**

Fewer POs absolutely streamlines communication and reduces time-consuming processes for both parties. Contractors typically create POs with distributors, and the more POs issued by a contractor, the more time required by distributors to sort and manage the orders. Reducing the number of POs not only drives significant reductions in overhead costs and increases margin for both contractors and distributors, but

also reduces the number of errors and omissions.

Streamlining the number of POs is a win-win for both contractors and distributors, and we encourage contractors of all sizes to leverage volume purchase programs offered by their distribution partners. If contractors can buy in bulk, use digital tools to automate processes, and give their distribution partners more information earlier in the project, it helps distributors with budgeting, and they can also better plan when and how to deliver the job.

There are several strategic ways in which electrical distributors and contractors can collaborate to reduce the number of POs. These include engaging in integrated supply agreements (where the distributor provides a comprehensive range of products and services tailored to meet the contractor’s needs over a period of time and consolidates needs into fewer, larger or-



ders). Through VMI, distributors can monitor contractors’ stock levels and automatically replenish supplies before they run low, while the adoption of electronic procurement and order management systems can streamline the ordering process, making it more efficient and less prone to errors. By closely collaborating on project schedules, distributors and contractors can also arrange for materials to be delivered in phases that are aligned with project timelines; staging deliveries according to the project’s phases can consolidate several smaller orders into larger, more manageable ones. Finally, joint training and education programs can help distributors and contractors better understand each other’s

operations, constraints, and opportunities and lead to more efficient processes and the development of innovative or custom solutions to reduce the number of POs.

The success of these strategies relies heavily on open communication, trust, and the willingness to invest in long-term partnerships. While the initial setup for some of these strategies might require significant effort and adjustment, the long-term benefits in efficiency, cost reduction, and project management effectiveness are substantial. ■

**Susan Bloom** has spent 25 years covering the lighting and electrical products industry. Reach her at [susan.bloom.chester@gmail.com](mailto:susan.bloom.chester@gmail.com).

Earlier this year, NAED began working with NECA and NEMA to coordinate a constructive response and suggest ideas and modifications that would facilitate this process.

“What [they’re] hoping to do...is to bond together and to say that the majority of these products should first of all be exempt from the PIN. If we can’t do that, then we suggest implementing a system that allows us to continue using SKUs so we don’t, for example, have to buy a new software system to track all of the products,” Schoening explained.

In a letter responding to the Treasury’s request for feedback, NEMA emphasized that permitting SKUs to remain the product identification method for these enabling technology products would be the most feasible method.

“[That] would provide flexibility for different product needs, reduce the time and cost of product identification implementation, and minimize confusion among homeowners, contractors, and distributors. Rather than develop a novel PIN regime that would create confusion, added consumer cost, and implementation hurdles, Treasury should adopt standard methods and practices that have been in place for decades,” the NEMA letter said.

“Enabling properties are critical to future-proofing homes so that homeowners can continue to make improvements to electrical systems as they become more widespread,” the letter added.

Schoening is hopeful that the combined NAED, NECA, and NEMA efforts toward finding an acceptable resolution will be successful.

“Our goal is to basically see if we can get in alignment to have a joint request from NEMA, NECA, and NAED to treat the enabling properties differently, whether that’s an outright exemption or to use existing methods like SKUs,” Schoening explained.

But essentially forcing an industry to use a new system of tracking inventory just isn’t necessary, Orlet emphasized. “While we support making sure that only legitimate products are brought to market, introducing an entirely new tracking system for the 25C tax credit when the industry already has mechanisms in place to track enabling properties is the wrong approach,” he said. ■

*Nowlan is a Boston-based freelance writer/editor and author. He can be reached at [jcnolan@msn.com](mailto:jcnolan@msn.com).*



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# A LASTING IMPACT

As his tour prepares to kick off a new season, Dirk Beveridge recalls an emotional visit.

by Scott Costa

**A**T THE END OF MAY, DIRK BEVERIDGE WILL HIT the road for the fourth season of his “We Supply America” tour. Beveridge, founder of UnleashWD and the executive producer of “We Supply America,” has noted many times how the tours have changed his perspective from what he called “the noble calling of distribution” to a new understanding of how distribution is actually a “Force for Good.”

At a stop last summer, Beveridge met Mike Rindy, president of Nelson Jamison, a food and dairy distributor based in Wisconsin. After a tour of the location, Beveridge informed Rindy that he is a “Force for Good” because of the way he runs his operation. That led to a very emotional response.

The two talked about the responsibility of management to be a “Force for Good,” the impact it has on employees, what it means to maintain that status, and how Rindy sees the world differently than other distributors.

Beveridge has visited hundreds of distributors across the country over the past three summers and says he’s watched organizations realize that not only is their company a “Force for Good,” but also the work they do is a “Force for Good.” And, Beveridge adds, many of the companies he’s met with have agreed to do “Good-er” in the future.

Beveridge has traveled across the country since 2021, meeting with independent distributors, learning their histories and stories, and, perhaps most importantly, talking with the people who work to make this supply chain what it is today. His travels have led to these “We Supply America” episodes that, as he describes them, “champion the noble calling of distribution” and are published only in the digital editions of *tED*. ■



## INDUSTRY INFO

To learn more about the “We Supply America” tour, read Dirk Beveridge’s blogs and watch episodes of his journey online.

[WESUPPLYAMERICA.NET](http://WESUPPLYAMERICA.NET)

Costa is the publisher of *tED*. Reach him at [scosta@naed.org](mailto:scosta@naed.org).



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Wesco's JA BizTown storefront includes a working stockroom with areas for inbound receiving, outbound shipping, an EV delivery truck, an EV charging station, workstations, and display areas for product placement and sales.

## GIVING BACK

### Wesco Helps to Build Young Entrepreneurs at JA BizTown

Pittsburgh-headquartered Wesco International announced a joint sponsorship with DTE Energy for the Tom Fox Family JA BizTown program in Grand Rapids, Mich. This program for fifth and sixth graders begins with 12 in-classroom learning sessions that teach the basic principles of economics and the importance of economic exchange, revenue, how to manage money, fundraising, marketing, pricing, budgeting, loans, government structure, voting, and various roles within a community. This mini business town features 13 real local businesses represented by small storefronts.

"We are proud to partner with DTE to foster new opportunities for students to learn about their energy provider and how supply chain partners enable all parts of everyday life," said James Cameron, executive vice president and general manager, Utility and Broadband Solutions.

### Van Meter Announces New Scholarship

Cedar Rapids, Iowa-headquartered Van Meter Inc. is helping power the future of the electrical industry through its new Spark Your Success Scholarship. The \$2,500 scholarship is awarded to up to four individuals who have completed a high school degree or GED and are pursu-



## AWARDS+HONORS

### UNITED ELECTRIC PRESENTS ANNUAL SUPPLIER AWARDS TO LEGRAND, HUBBELL

United Electric Supply, Wilmington, Del., recently named its second annual supplier awards: Legrand was named Overall Strategic Supplier, and Hubbell was named Strategic Marketing Supplier. The awards were given at United Electric's annual Sales Summit dinner in February.

### VAN METER INC. RANKS AMONG BEST U.S. COMPANIES FOR WORKPLACE SATISFACTION

For the second consecutive year, Van Meter Inc., Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is a Top Workplaces USA award recipient as one of the top 100 qualifying mid-size companies in the United States. Van Meter is ranked No. 32 among companies with 500 to 999 employees in *USA Today's* publication of Top Workplaces. In addition, Van Meter was named a 2023 Top Workplace in Iowa and Minnesota and won cultural excellence awards for professional development, work-life flexibility, employee well-being, compensation, benefits, and more.

### LEGRAND NAMES 2023 NORTH AMERICAN MARKETEEER OF THE YEAR AWARD RECIPIENTS

Winners of Legrand's annual Marketeer of the Year competition included Cooper Electric, a Sonepar Company, Cranbury, N.J.; CED, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho; CED, Phoenix; CED (National), Ft. Worth, Texas; CED/Efengee Electrical Supply, Elk Grove, Ill.; Electric Supply, Tampa, Fla.; Elliott Electric Supply, Terrell, Texas; GESCAN—Canada, Calgary, Alberta; Hannan Supply, Paducah, Ky.; Kendall Electric, Elkhart, Ind.; North Coast, a Sonepar Company, Seattle; Warshauer Electric Supply, Tinton Falls, N.J.; and Warshauer Electric Supply, Woodbury, N.J.

### nVENT RECEIVES SEVERAL RECOGNITIONS

nVent was named one of the World's Most Ethical Companies by Ethisphere, received its first gold sustainability rating from EcoVadis, was recognized as one of America's Greenest Companies by *Newsweek*, and was named to *Fortune Magazine's* Best Workplaces in Manufacturing and Production list.

ing a field related to the electrical trades.

“Supporting education within the electrical trades is a top priority, and we’re excited to give people access to work in this industry,” said Danielle Monthei, community impact manager.

#### MILESTONE

##### Arlington Celebrates 75 Years

Arlington is celebrating its 75th year in business. Founded in 1949, the company first served the electrical industry as a regional supplier of zinc die-cast fittings. Since then it has become a leading manufacturer of Made in USA traditional metallic and nonmetallic fittings and connectors as well as unique and innovative electrical and communications products. ■



**Got** an event or news item to share in “tED”? Send it to [mbyers@naed.org](mailto:mbyers@naed.org).



## INDUSTRY NEWS

Around the Globe

› **UES Opens New RSC in VA**  
United Electric, Wilmington, Del., has expanded into Culpeper, Va., with the opening of a regional service center.

› **Sonepar Expands in Canada**  
Charleston, South Carolina-based Sonepar, which first entered Canada in 1984, recently acquired Electrozaad Supply. Headquartered

in Windsor, Ontario, Electrozaad has branches in Windsor, London, Sarnia, and Chatham and employs more than 100 associates.

› **Rep Materials Opens in CA**  
Electrical conduit solutions provider Rep Materials recently announced the grand opening of its new U.S. manufacturing facility in Oxnard, Calif.

› **Eaton Opens 5th in DR**  
Eaton is opening a new assembly plant in Santiago de los Caballeros, its fifth manufacturing site in the Dominican Republic. The 65,000-square-foot facility will bring approximately 300 manufacturing jobs to the area.

For up-to-date industry news and information, go to [tEDmag.com](http://tEDmag.com).



## New Grand Slam home run junction box

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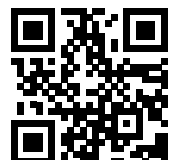
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Arlington is celebrating 75 years in business in 2024!

Founded in 1949, Arlington first served the electrical industry as a regional supplier of zinc die cast fittings. After the Stark family acquired the company in 1956, Arlington's focus turned to expanding the product line to meet the changing needs of the industry. And to developing products that solve job site problems and situations, enhance safety and above all, save installers time.



Over the past 75 years, Arlington has become a leading manufacturer of traditional metallic and non-metallic fittings and connectors - while remaining an industry leader in the development of MADE IN USA unique and innovative electrical and communications products. In fact most of our products are made in the U.S. We have introduced hundreds of new products since Tom Stark became President of the company in 1976. And currently have more than 350 patents and patents pending in North America.



**75**  
**YEARS**



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**AnyBody™** conduit bodies and **QuickLatch™** pipe hangers, among many others, have made their mark on the electrical industry.

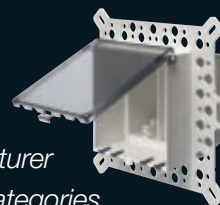
Today, Arlington makes more individual zinc die cast line items than anyone else, and is still the only independent electrical fittings manufacturer with injection molding capability for producing non-metallic fittings in-house, here in the United States.

We remain firmly committed to new product development – a fact recognized by the many awards received from industry trade

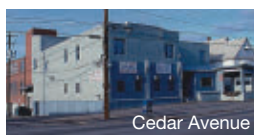
publications for innovative products in designated categories.

Arlington has also won numerous awards over the years in the Manufacturer of the Year and Supplier of the Year categories. Thank you to everyone; customers, representatives, employees and management who have contributed to our success over the past 75 years.

We look forward to the next 75!



First plant location



Cedar Avenue

Factory moves to Cedar Avenue in Scranton



**1949**

Arlington founded in New York State



**1956**

Eugene Stark Sr. acquires Arlington



**1959**

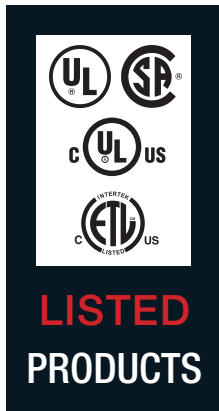
Arlington relocates to the Heinz Building, its first plant location in Scranton, Pennsylvania

**1960s**

**1976**

Tom Stark becomes president upon his graduation from the University of Florida





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PATENTS



Ray Kennedy  
Arlington's first  
National Sales  
Manager  
joins Arlington

Major plant  
expansion  
begins with  
acquisition  
of Building 2

Multiple  
plant  
expansions,  
Buildings 1 & 2

Design, Build  
new Training/  
Conference room  
Building 2



Major renovation  
at company  
headquarters  
Design, Build new  
Corporate Offices

1987

Tom Gretz joins  
Arlington as  
Vice President.  
Under his supervision  
the factory moves to  
its present location  
in Stauffer Industrial  
Park

1988



1992

2000-  
2018



Stauffer Industrial Park Plant

2018-  
2019

Renovation,  
Enlargement of  
Engineering Facility  
Building 1

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B U S I N E S S

/ MARKET FOCUS

# BUY INTO RETAIL

*by* Jan Niehaus

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**IN 2002, SHOPPING CENTERS GENERATED SALES OF \$1.23 trillion**—half of all retail sales in the nation, excluding auto dealerships and gas stations. Much of this sales volume derived from the multiplying megacenters populated by big-box stores.

These new, massive centers drew shoppers away from traditional malls that are anchored by department stores with many smaller stores for jewelry, shoes, health supplements, cosmetics, pets, etc. Local, independent retailers operating in malls and stand-alone locations in neighborhoods such as bookstores, pharmacies, grocers, and florists—all much smaller than the national behemoths—struggled to compete. Many didn't survive.

At the same time, in a seemingly contradictory juxtaposition, roughly 3,000 Walmart stores stood empty, vacated when the company followed demographic shifts and/or relocated to capture fresh tax incentives. Malls were also shutting down. In 2002, approximately 10% of the five billion square feet of retail space in the United States sat empty.



#### INDUSTRY INFO

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[NAED.org/data-insights](http://NAED.org/data-insights)

Just a few years earlier, in 1995, Amazon.com had appeared, wreaking havoc first among booksellers. Between 1995 and 2000, the number of independent bookstores shrank by 43%. Borders finally closed its doors in 2011.

Since then, Amazon has expanded its offerings exponentially, pushing even more brick-and-mortar retailers out of business. Amazon has even caused some consternation in the electrical distribution universe.

Enter COVID-19 in 2019, and the accelerating trend toward online shopping kicked into hyperdrive. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2020 e-commerce sales increased 42.8% year over year, topping out at \$815.4 billion. Last year, e-commerce sales in the United States reached \$1.118 trillion, representing 22% of total retail sales, the largest share to date.

#### Amazon Builds

Building on 20 years of extreme online success, in 2015 Amazon opened its own brick-and-mortar stores, starting

## NEW HR & TRAINING BENCHMARKING REPORT

#### With 48% of distributors

expected to increase new hires in 2024 and turnover rates averaging 6% higher, NAED's latest *HR & Training Benchmarking Report* comes at the right time for distributors to see how other members approach onboarding, professional development, and talent management. This report also features demographic information for the industry and trended data to compare current results with surveys from 2021 and 2019.

Visit the NAED Shop to download the report; log in for special member pricing (\$499) for a limited time. —tED



with bookstores. Two years later, Amazon bought Whole Foods. Soon thereafter, the juggernaut launched 4-Star stores, pop-up kiosks in malls, and another grocery store chain: Amazon Fresh.

Then in March 2022, rather suddenly, Amazon closed 68 physical retail stores—Books, 4-Star, and mall kiosks—announcing its intention to focus on its grocery stores and Amazon Style, a new apparel brand.

“We’re all very curious to see what Amazon has planned as they shift away from their Amazon Fresh brand to some other model,” said Sean Unsell, associate principal with the architecture and design firm RDC, which specializes in retail. According to Unsell, “Some of the Amazon Fresh stores never opened, and others appeared to have lackluster performance. We think Amazon is going back to reimagine what their brick-and-mortar grocery stores are going to be. They have the technology and money to back whatever they do.”

While keeping an eye on Amazon’s maneuvers, RDC is busy helping developers and owners take advantage of prime urban real estate: still-vacant malls and abandoned big-box stores.

“We are experiencing an increase in adaptive reuse scenarios to the closure of some brands and locations such as Bed Bath & Beyond, Rite Aid, and Walgreens,” said Unsell. “We have a lot of experience converting these buildings into grocery and retail spaces to bring them back to life.” For example, RDC converted a three-story, 120,000-square-foot Lord + Taylor department store in Chicago to retail, food and beverage, and entertainment uses.

Unsell noted the significant advantages of adaptive reuse: buildings located at busy cross streets, utility infrastructure already in place, and ample parking. Many are in walkable neighborhoods with public transportation access and other nearby retail. Besides, there’s precious little unde-

veloped land in urban centers. Another major advantage for developers: “Adaptive reuse provides a quicker timeline to renovate, rather than building ground-up projects. It saves money, and it also reduces the carbon footprint, which is something we are passionate about,” Unsell said.

Unsell reported other trends in the industry, with mergers and acquisitions at the top of the list: “There is a potential Kroger/Albertsons merger that’s going through FTC approvals right now. Aldi has purchased 400 Winn-Dixie and Harveys stores in the Southeast. They are going to bring some fierce competition to large operators like Target and Walmart.” Some grocery brands maintain a competitive edge by catering to niche markets. “We do a lot of work with Erewhon, a specialty, luxury, organic grocer,” Unsell said.

Expanding e-commerce is another trend. “Most retailers, whether it’s electronics, apparel, or grocery, have invested in some level of e-commerce, whether it is an in-store fulfillment center, delivering online orders, or curbside pickup. Without it, they can’t compete with some of the bigger brands that are doing a great job with that,” Unsell explained.

RDC has committed to a goal of reducing the embodied carbon in building materials by 40% by 2030. “We are always trying to reduce our carbon footprint. We are looking at ways to salvage concrete, steel, and building materials that are available in closer proximity, rather than shipping them in. It also reduces waste. These measures reduce our costs and our construction timelines.”

Electrical products also play a role

in RDC’s sustainability quest. “Because of long lead times, there is a strong demand to recertify and reuse switchgear. We can save thousands of dollars and six months. We are implementing a lot of PV panels and EV charging infrastructure on our new projects and some existing properties too,” Unsell said. He also noted a growing demand for surveillance and security solutions at shopping destinations, omnipresent LEDs, and lighting controls, all tied into retailers’ energy management systems.

In February, the property management firm JLL announced that

“Urban retail is poised for an investor resurgence in 2024” and supported its forecast with these facts:

- The national retail vacancy rate reached a historic low of 4.2% in December 2023.
- Vacated big-box stores are snatched up immediately by other large retailers.
- In 2023, the number of new store announcements

(6,617) outpaced store closure announcements (4,412).

- Domestic and international tourism is approaching pre-2019 levels.
- Wage levels have risen nationwide.

Retail’s recovery from the tumultuous COVID years continues, as the landscape, both physical and virtual, keeps evolving, driven by consumers’ ever-changing preferences and the inexorable march of technology. Electrical distributors are in a perfect position to influence this continuous transformation. ■

**Niehaus**, LEED GA, is an instructional designer and writer and the president and founder of Communication by Design. Reach her at 314-644-4135.



**Adaptive reuse provides a quicker timeline to renovate, rather than building ground-up projects. It saves money, and it also reduces the carbon footprint, which is something we are passionate about.**

—SEAN UNSSELL,  
RDC

# MORE THAN THE MONEY

The opportunities that electrification brings are not only financial, but also impact employees on both professional and personal levels.

hosted by **Scott Costa**

**W**HILE MAKING, BUYING, and selling products related to electrification has been a boost for our supply chain, it's also creating a buzz for the next generation of our workforce. As a result, the opportunities electrification brings are beginning to have a significant impact.

Outside of the financial opportunity, distributors and manufacturers are learning how it is impacting their employees on both professional and personal levels. Katie Albright, director of commercial operations for Strategic Growth Initiatives at Rexel, says her entire day is centered on electrification projects. Allison Coleman, director of industrial and construction operations for strategic Growth at Prysmian, adds that her opportunities with multiple electrification projects are bringing strong demand. Both say that they have seen



increasing demand for renewable energy products over the past 18 months.

Albright and Coleman are 2023 *tED* magazine 30 Under 35 Award honorees. They see their jobs as meaningful. They enjoy the work they do and they see how the shift to electrification, which promotes sustainability for future generations, can be used to recruit young environmentally conscious candidates to the electrical distribution industry.

The “DistributED” podcast, hosted by *tED* Publisher Scott Costa, takes an

extended look into NAED products and events along with best practices and ideas that can be shared throughout the supply chain. Find it on all podcast players or watch the video podcasts at [tEDmag.com/podcast](http://tEDmag.com/podcast). ■

*Costa is the publisher of tED. Reach him at [scosta@naed.org](mailto:scosta@naed.org).*





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/ SALES SPOTLIGHT

# PROSPECTING FOR THE LONG TERM

*by Carolyn Heinze*



**S**ALESPEOPLE KNOW THAT PROSPECTING IS hard work. For this reason, it makes sense to view relationship building with the long term in mind. “You don’t close a sale—you open a relationship,” said Mark Hunter, a sales trainer, consultant, and author of several books, including *High-Profit Prospecting: Powerful Strategies to Find the Best Leads and Drive Breakthrough Sales Results*. A good salesperson, he emphasizes, looks to the future. “The only good sale is the one that leads to the next sale,” he noted.

To make that next sale (and the following one, and the one after that), here are some best practices to apply:

- **Be a problem-solver.**

Customers don’t base their purchasing decisions on how smooth a sales pitch is, argues Michael Hinkle, founder and CEO of JBI, a sales coaching and consulting firm, and author of *Treasure Hunt: A Common-Sense Approach to Building a Successful Sales Career*. Clients buy from salespeople who can solve their problems.

“I don’t use the word ‘salesperson’ very often; I like to think of myself as a partner in their business,” Hinkle said. “I’m going to help make their business run smoother and be more profitable.”

- **Define buyer personas.**

One thing that slows salespeople down is when they cast too wide a net in their prospecting activities. Nick Kane, managing partner at Janek Performance Group, a sales consulting and training firm, and coauthor (with Justin Zappulla) of *Critical Selling: How Top Performers Accelerate the Sales Process and Close More Deals*, favors a more strategic approach that helps salespeople prioritize their prospects.

To do this, salespeople should examine the purchasing practices of previous customers, including why they bought from the organization and what attracts them to doing business with it. They should also invest the time in developing customer personas: What buyers is the company targeting? What do they care about? What products and services are of value to them?

Kane noted that it’s also

important to understand the concerns of everyone involved in the purchasing process—not just the individual who oversees expenditures.

Kane illustrated this using his own firm as an example. Janek Performance Group provides sales consulting and

training; usually, its key customer is the head of sales or chief sales officer. However, there are also other parties who influence whether their organization will hire Kane’s firm, including sales managers, HR leaders, and those who oversee learning and development.

“In B2B environments, it’s very rare for one person to make the decision anymore; it’s almost always a decision by committee,” Kane explained. “Even though you have one person who might be leading the charge—and that is the true economic buyer or the final decision-maker—they’re not making that [decision] in a vacuum. They’re getting influence from others in the organization.”

This is why, Kane said, it’s important for salespeople to identify these influencers—as well as any champions or advocates—and tailor their messaging to each different persona.

It’s also necessary for salespeople to know the organization they’re targeting. This is especially important for more complex sales. “If [the sale] is truly strategic in nature, you should know that company deeply,” Kane said. He advises salespeople to find out who sits on the board and to read the organization’s most recent financial report (if it’s public). And, of course, it’s wise to understand trends in the potential client’s industry. “Those are all things you should know because that’s how you’re going to gain insights to be able to open doors with your prospecting activities.”

- **Work the phone.**

While email, text messages, and social media are all valid modes of communication, Kane encourages salespeople to use the telephone when reaching out to potential clients.

“The phone still tends to be the most effective way to prospect, pique interest, and create awareness,” he said. “Don’t be afraid to use the phone.”

Kane noted that on the phone, salespeople can engage prospects in a

#### INDUSTRY INFO

NAED’s CEP program trains all levels of sales roles via engaging videos, online modules, learning activities, and helpful job aids.

[NAED.org/cep](http://NAED.org/cep)

#### REP ROUNDUP



- **C.C. Pierce** now reps CANTEX in the northern region of New York State.

- Shat-R-Shield Lighting

announced a new partnership with **Lightspec** in Upstate New York.

- **Marvin Bochner Inc.** expanded to North Carolina and South Carolina, partnering with **E.F. Lombardi** in those states.

- O’Blaney Rinker Associates, recently rebranded **ORA Lighting and Controls**, joined **Diversified Group**.

more fluid conversation and gather the information they need in real time. Those who work the phone also stand out. “[Prospects] are so used to getting email and other forms of communication that when they get a phone call, they’re almost taken aback a little bit,” he said.

- **Leverage technology.**

Today, salespeople have access to a wide range of technology tools that can help them prospect efficiently. Kane encourages people to take advantage of this. For research, he points to LinkedIn Sales Navigator and ZoomInfo. For outreach, he highlights HubSpot Sales, Outreach, and Salesloft.

- **Make cold calling warmer.**

For many salespeople, cold calling is one of the least pleasant aspects of the job. Making it more appealing requires a strategic approach.

Hunter encourages salespeople to view cold calling as “warm calling.” If, for example, an electrical distributor is well positioned to help a contractor with a challenging project, there’s no reason to be reticent about making the call.

“If you know you can help someone, you have an obligation to reach out to them,” he said. “In my mind, that changes the whole scope of how I view the call.” It’s no longer a cold call; it’s a “warm” call because the salesperson is offering a solution to a problem instead of simply pushing product.

Like Hunter, Hinkle dislikes the term “cold calling.” Instead, he views it as reaching out to friends that the salesperson hasn’t made yet. It’s a matter of perspective, he said.

“Sales is a heavy mindset game,” Hinkle said. “You have to be self-motivating, and you have to be able to create the picture for yourself that you want to see.”

Kane noted that cold calling takes several forms:

- ✓ The salesperson works at an organization that is perceived as a

market leader. In this case, it may not be necessary to create as much awareness of their product and service offerings because the prospect already knows about them.

- ✓ The salesperson is reaching out to a company that has already done business with their organization but is targeting someone in a different department, vertical market, or region.

- ✓ The prospect is at an organization that may not know about the salesperson’s company at all.

Of course, the messaging for each will be slightly different. In all cases, the salesperson should focus on delivering valuable information to the potential customer, such as white papers, articles they may be interested in, industry insights and reports, or other educational materials that provide answers to problems that prospect may be grappling with.

“If you can address a challenging issue they’re facing, or just new technology in the industry, you can be a resource to them—it’s not a sales call,” Kane said. Salespeople should be generous with this information, even if the prospect isn’t doing business with their company right now. “All you want to do with cold calling—or prospecting more generally—is elicit a response. You’re not selling a product yet. You’re just trying to sell a conversation.”

#### **View Sales as a Service**

The word “sales” is often viewed negatively, including by some salespeople. Hunter urges sales professionals to put their activities into a more positive context.

“[I think of it as] we are providing a service to our customers. I can only be as successful as my customers are, so I want to help my customers. And if I can help my customers, I will win,” Hunter concluded. ■

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# ELEVATE YOUR SALES SKILLS!



**NAED.ORG/CEP**

**ENHANCED  
CONTENT**



# WINNING WAYS

Three companies earned honors in 2023 for their entries in the Public Relations–Corporate category.

FOR MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY, *tED* magazine's Best of the Best Marketing Competition has recognized excellence in marketing throughout the electrical distribution channel. Each year hundreds of entries are judged in a variety of categories. In 2023, 52 entries earned the honor of being named "Best of the Best." Each month this column showcases those winning efforts.

The competition's PR—Corporate category awards planned communication programs that serve (primarily) the interest of the submitting organizations and build mutually beneficial relationships with key publics. In 2023, three entries took home top honors in this category.

## United Electric Supply

### *LinkedIn Employee Advocacy*

When United was creating its strategy for a cohesive social media presence in 2021, part of the research process was to identify which employee-owners had LinkedIn profiles and whether or not they were active. Because many employee-owners were not active on LinkedIn, the marketing team saw an opportunity to help them learn about the benefits of the plat-

form and created a two-phase educational approach: to first help management better understand LinkedIn and then present a broader webinar for all other employee-owners.

The company profile was first evaluated and updated with profile content and consistent branding across all social platforms. Management was provided with training so they could better share the benefits of LinkedIn and help advocate for updates and coach their teams.

A grading system was used to identify areas of opportunity within a profile and included several criteria: a compelling background image, a professional profile picture, use of a headline, use of the "About" section (particularly the first 40 characters), a cohesive experience listing, listed

licenses and certifications (if applicable), and recommendations.

A 45-minute training session shared the findings of the rating system and explained the components of a fully utilized LinkedIn profile with the roles and benefits each component serves, as well as options for a one-on-one follow-up meeting with a social media specialist or a group workshop. The training presentation cited reference articles and included

access to approved company-branded background images for use.

Once the profiles were either updated or put into hibernation mode (at the discretion of the employee-owner), the training was rolled out to the entire company. Everyone was encouraged to take advantage of updating their profile or disable it until a time when they felt ready to engage online. Two days of headshot photography was available so that anyone who wanted could get a headshot done at no cost. This training is now part of the onboarding process for new employee-owners.

"What an innovative idea," said the judges. "I really liked the one-on-one follow-up and how ratings increased for those who updated their profiles. And it's great PR because everyone's LinkedIn profiles are representative of the company."

## NorthEast Electrical

### *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Community Scholarships and Grants*

In March 2022, NorthEast Electrical launched seven \$1,000 scholarships and six \$500 grant opportunities for graduating high school seniors throughout New England in a program designed by NorthEast's DEI Committee to demonstrate support for the trades and encourage workforce diversification in the vocational fields. Applicants were asked to submit a short essay on the topic "What does diversity, equity, and inclusion mean to you?"

Supporting the program were a landing page, email campaigns, radio ads, press releases, and social media posts. Flyers and postcards were sent to all NorthEast branches and outside sales associates and distributed to local high schools. TV screens at 16 NorthEast counters also pushed custom content to customers.

**tED**  
the electrical distributor  
magazine

BEST  
OF THE  
BEST

Marketing  
Competition  
2023

SEE OUR AUGUST 2023 ISSUE FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF 2023 BEST OF THE BEST WINNERS. THE SUBMISSION WINDOW FOR OUR 2024 CONTEST RAN JAN. 1 TO MARCH 31 AND IS NOW CLOSED. VISIT [TEDMAG.COM/BEST](http://TEDMAG.COM/BEST) FOR MORE INFORMATION.



2023 WINNING ENTRIES /  
PR—CORPORATE



NorthEast Electrical



United Electric Supply



Acuity Brands

“We love this,” said the judges. “It’s great for both recruitment and industry awareness and it’s tightly tied to the NorthEast brand.”

### Acuity Brands

#### 2022 EarthLIGHT Report

Acuity Brands has an objective to further establish itself as positioned at the intersection of sustainability and technology so that it can capitalize on two mega-trends: minimizing the impacts of climate change and maximizing the impacts of technology.

As an integral part of this strategy, EarthLIGHT reflects the company’s comprehensive approach around its ESG priorities. In fiscal 2022, Acuity made significant advancements to reduce its environmental impact, build out its values-driven culture, and enhance its governance activities.

The annual *EarthLIGHT Report*, which highlights key efforts to meet the company’s overall ESG initiatives, provides transparency around these efforts via distribution to various stakeholders within the industry, including investors.

The report focuses on Acuity Brands establishing its ambition to reach Net Zero emissions by 2040, advance its DEI strategy, and focus on reducing both its and its customers’ overall carbon footprint, among other efforts.

To help disseminate the report to industry stakeholders, several tactics were employed including a 2022 *EarthLIGHT Report* web page, a letter from ABL President to Acuity Brands’s independent sales network, customer e-newsletter stories, a blog post, a paid LD+A newsletter placement, organic social media posts across platforms, and a Global Newswire submission.

“More than 100 news outlets picked up the story,” noted the judges. “Acuity really has an understanding of PR and how to leverage it for its brand.”

### Honorable Mentions

One honorable mention was awarded to entrants in this category:

- Legrand: *Interior Design Spotlights Legrand’s dash Configurable Power Solutions* —tED

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# ECONOMIC & INDUSTRY SECTOR OUTLOOK

Backed by Economists, **Armada Intel**, **Mr. Keith Prather (MBA)** and **Dr. Christopher Kuehl (PhD)**



## FEATURES

→ Executive summary!  
High level info to you in a snap shot of the economy and each of the 8 sectors.

→ The outlook forecasts 8 industries and their economic indicators including the economy as a whole, looking at unemployment, copper prices, GDP and more.

→ The outlook is designed for EVERYONE not just CEOs, Executives, and Decision Makers.

This can be used as a learning tool for those just starting out in the industry OR for those that want to understand more about how the economy affects the electrical industry.



## REVIEWS



"I HAVEN'T FOUND A BETTER, MORE SUCCINCT TOOL THAN THE NAED'S NEW ECONOMIC AND INDUSTRY SECTOR OUTLOOK AND CONSTRUCTION INDEX, I ENCOURAGE ALL DISTRIBUTORS TO GIVE IT A TRIAL RUN AND SEE IF IT'S AS HELPFUL TO THEM AS IT IS TO US."

— **WES SMITH**, President & CEO, NAED



"WE SEE IT AS A COST-SAVING OFFERING THAT HELPS US CONSOLIDATE THE SEVERAL SERVICES WE USE, AND AS NAED'S SERVICE CONTINUES TO BUILD OUT, WE'RE HOPING THAT IT CAN EVENTUALLY MEET ALL OF OUR FORECASTING NEEDS OVER TIME. SO FAR, THE FIRST REPORT IS IMPRESSIVE AND WE LIKE WHAT WE SEE."

— **DAN DUNGAN**, Executive Chairman (Ret.), Springfield Electric



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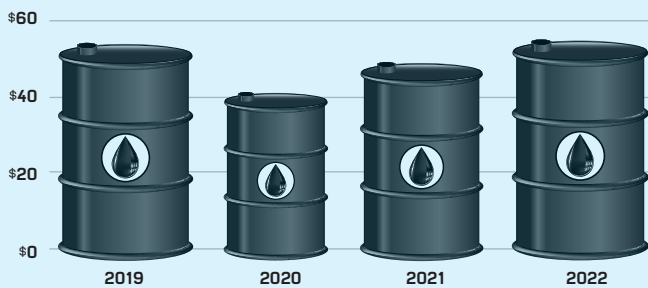
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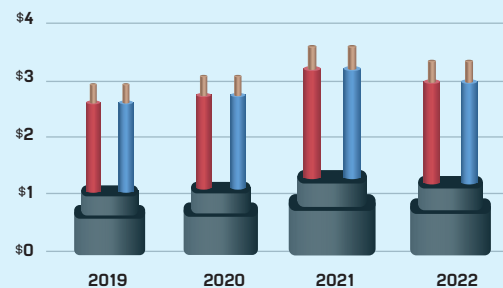
## PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

*Numbers in charts below are for example purposes only.*

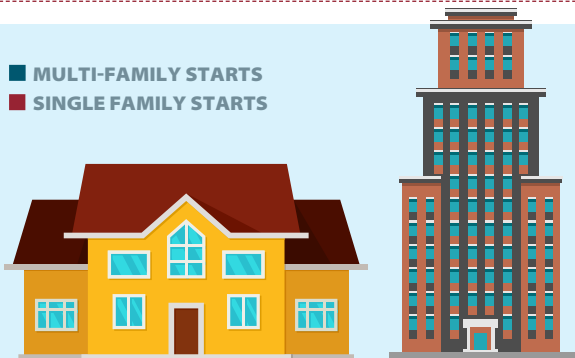
### Total U.S. Oil Prices per Barrel (By Year & Forecast)



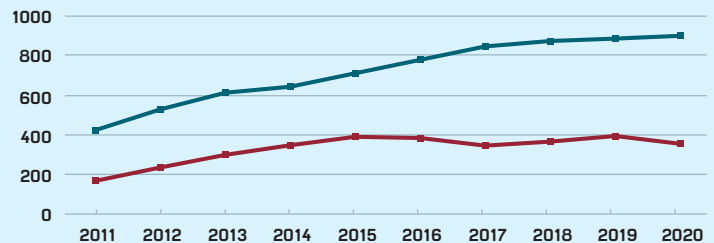
### Average Price of Copper (By Year & Forecast)



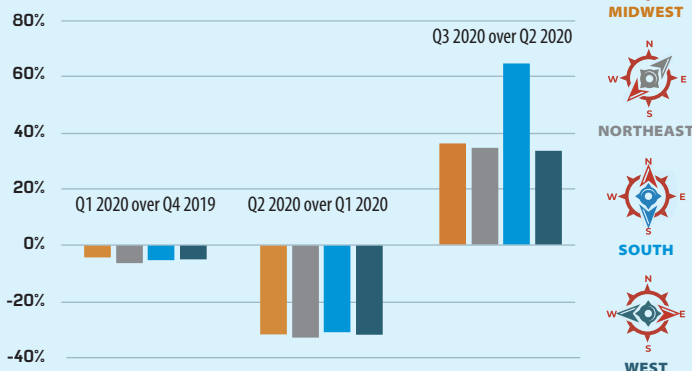
■ MULTI-FAMILY STARTS  
■ SINGLE FAMILY STARTS



### Year-Over-Year Housing Starts



### Average % Change in Real GDP By Region



### Pricing Options for Manufacturers (FREE TO DISTRIBUTOR MEMBERS)









# MAKING AN IMPACT

**George Vorwick**, recipient of the  
2024 Arthur W. Hooper Achievement Award,  
leads with vision and a personal touch.

by **Carol Katarsky** / photography by **Hudson Nichols Photography**

**I**T'S NOT OFTEN THAT A MINOR ACT OF TEENAGE rebellion leads to a decades-long career as successful as that of this year's Arthur Hooper Award winner, but most people don't have the drive and vision of George Vorwick.

Vorwick got his start in the industry at 16, after being caught sneaking out to see *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. His dad told him not to come back home until he had gotten a part-time job, and the local electrical distributor was the first place to make him an offer. He started out doing tasks like sweeping, but he stayed there through high school and continued working there while attending night school. He eventually left after 21 years, having worked his way to the position of corporate vice president of sales.

In 2000, he joined United Electric Supply, New Castle, Del., originally as district sales manager and interim branch manager. He was named president and CEO in 2009. In that time, he's not only grown United's footprint

and scope, but also played a significant role in other industry organizations. At various times he has served as NAED chair, as an IMARK board member and chair, on the IDEA board, and many more.

In those roles, Vorwick is noted for his creativity and vision. "He's incredibly collaborative, values focused, and interested in shaping the future," said Aamir Paul, president, North American Operations, Schneider Electric. "He has the capacity to imagine a future that isn't obvious. It's been a privilege to have him as a key partner and to serve with him on the NAED Board of Directors."

"[George has earned ] this award through his superior leadership and his continual giving back of his time, not just to United, but also to NAED and IMARK," said Bob Smith, president, IMARK. "He does it because it's the right thing to do and it's right for the industry. He's not looking for anything in return. It's easy to do that for a year or two but quite another to do it constantly for 20 or more years as he has."



## WORDS OF PRAISE

Perhaps those who know him best are the people George Vorwick works with every day. Here, key employees at United describe their experience working with him.

"George is one of the most driven leaders I've ever had the pleasure of working with. He is focused on the success of not only our organization, but also the industry as a whole. It's his focus and drive that inspires the team and moves the organization toward success. George has devoted his life and career to developing people. Whether that's in the day-to-day operation of our organization, the electrical distribution industry, or any of the many boards he serves on, George is always seeking to drive the team to success. —**Lindsey Cropper**, vice president of HR

"George is great at strategic decision-making and financial acumen and has a visionary mindset, and he is also someone who has an uncanny ability to develop relationships with the people around him by showing empathy and care. He is not solely focused on the bottom line of the company. While the bottom line is still important, he legitimately cares about the impact he has on our employee-owners and their families, our customers, our manufacturers, and society as a whole.

"He has an innate ability to inspire and motivate people, helping them see a future, better version of themselves and our company. He is an exceptional communicator when it comes to delivering his vision, but it is not only his vision; it is always collaborative due to his ability to listen to, connect with, and gain information from people. He wants us all to succeed and grow, but he has never been afraid to provide constructive criticism while giving you a high five at the end. He encourages us all to have the difficult, uncomfortable conversations with one another to drive improvement." —**Eric Wyzykowski**, vice president of finance

"Whether constructing a table for his daughter's apartment, working on a speech for an industry event, or planning a sailboat race, George has a passion and zest for what he does in life. His wife, Kathy, and his three daughters keep him humble and grounded. George realizes the sacrifices his family has made so he can be successful at what he enjoys.

"George never takes the credit himself. It was a group effort even if he had to pull everyone through. Some CEOs can lose the ability to connect and listen to others, but it is an innate part of him. It's a joy to work with him and watch his brain work." —**Anna Sporay**, executive assistant to the CEO and vice president of HR

"He is a futuristic thinker and can identify growth opportunities that others may not see in their companies, departments, or even themselves. He challenges the status quo while being humble in his successes. Prioritizing trust and honesty in relationships is important to him and shows through the many relationships he has within our company and industry.

"He is someone that people respect, trust, and reach out to for guidance. His work ethic shows through his constant passion for always being present and available and his ethical decision-making. He is a lifelong learner and always willing to share the books he reads and what he is learning." —**Becky Starkey**, director of marketing

## The State of the Industry

In his decades in the business, Vorwick has seen a lot of change, but in his view, the fundamentals of a successful distributorship haven't changed. "Hire smart people who want to help others, invest in your employees by providing opportunities for training and growth, spend as much time with customers as you can, and treat your suppliers like customers," he said.

It's a lesson he learned firsthand, noting that in his early career those he worked with invested in him and taught him the fundamentals of good service and the financial workings of a distributor. He's made a point to continue to learn, not only formally through resources such as the University of Innovative Distribution, but also informally from interacting with his customers.

"[The courses] at the University of Innovative Distribution really helped me become a leader," he explained. "When you take time to explain the 'why' behind the 'what,' employees can make better decisions and own the solution. And I've also learned a lot from customers over the years: how to help them, to challenge their assumptions, and importantly when we can't help."

Vorwick takes those lessons and applies them to his day-to-day leadership as well as challenges. "He's really good at finding a problem and looking at it as an opportunity. That sounds cliché but that's truly how he thinks: What's the challenge? How can we go after this?" said Steve Helle, president, Granite City Electric Supply, Quincy, Mass.

Helle noted that Granite City and United have had teams of employees visit each other to compare notes. "We still have things we handle very differently—but with George, he'll tell you what he thinks, and you know you're getting the unvarnished truth," he explained. "He's not remotely happy with standing still. For





From left: Anna Sporay, executive assistant to the president and CEO and the vice president of HR; Tony Buonocore, vice president, Field Services & Industry Sales; Lindsey Cropper, vice president of HR; George Vorwick, president and CEO; Eric Wzyzkowski, vice president, finance; Becky Starkey, director, marketing; Eric Slemmer, director, warehouse operations

me, personally and professionally, it makes me better.

“For example, he’s been investing money in tech interface way before others were and the return has been tough, but he’s been relentless. He’s given back everything he’s gotten from the industry and more, and that’s to be admired.”

### On the Horizon

Vorwick isn’t resting on his laurels; he still has big plans and visions for his company and the industry.

At United, he’s doing long-range planning. “I’m working with a pretty new group of execs, and my goal is to help them be ready to lead our company into the coming decades. We will continue to innovate and remain customer centric,” he said. He’s also excited about the work that NAED is doing with NECA and NEMRA to

improve labor efficiency. “This is the first time the entire industry has come together to work on a project jointly,” he noted.

He’s also looking forward to seeing how the industry adapts to new technology, especially AI. “How are we going to apply this technology? What is the potential impact on the people we work with? We will need to be thoughtful about both,” he said. He cautioned that with potentially disruptive technology, it’s important to have a plan to move forward—one that takes into account the people who might be displaced in the process.

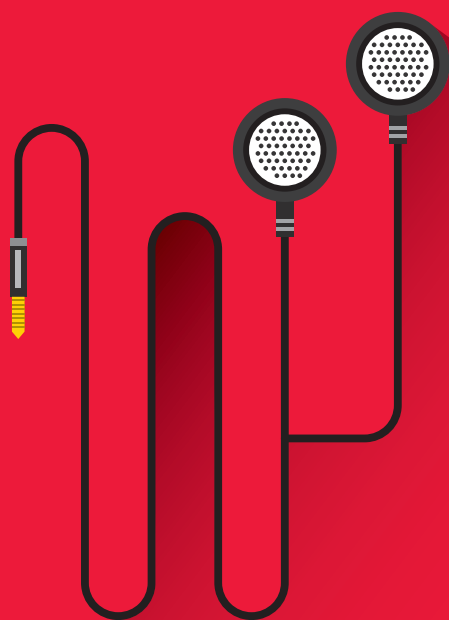
A decade from now, Vorwick expects distribution will still be relied on for logistical support but will be doing more to fill the gaps in what customers are able to do.

“Configuring augmented reality software that can provide instant

access to building systems designs and instructions, monitoring power, design assistance and startup, panel assembly—the list of things distribution can provide is endless,” he said. What continues to be challenging for distribution is navigating the complexities of charging for certain services. “Our business systems must adapt to seamlessly enable our teams to price, cost, and bill for unique high-value services. Once you’ve fully adopted a ‘charge for high-value service’ business model, anything your customer might need becomes an investment opportunity,” Vorwick added.

He noted that when United first started selling services, he benefited from having like-minded people at NAED to help him get started. “Ten years later, it’s catching on. Our services are some of the most prof-

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NATIONAL  
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itable parts of our business," he said.

Asked how he felt about his long career in the channel, Vorwick recalled attending his first NAED meeting 30 years ago with his wife, Kathy. "We knew no one and no one was talking to us. I told her, 'One day we're going to know everybody.' Over the years, Kathy and I have made a great team," he said, adding that some of the most memorable moments from those many meetings and events were the one-off conversations with leaders who generously shared their time and expertise with him.

He noted that he's found his time in the channel to be both professionally and personally satisfying. "I've had the opportunity to work on some really cool construction projects. I've been part of building research hospitals, museums, and performing arts centers. I'm amazed by the creativity of the architects and what they bring to our communities. It's satisfying to walk into a hospital knowing we did some of the design work to make it homier for patients.

"I also value the collegiality we share with our peers and competitors. I have friendships with some of the owners of local competitors; we don't talk about sales or customers—we talk about our struggles," he continued. "It's a blessing to have a community with a willingness to share and care about how we're all doing.

"It's a humbling experience and immensely gratifying to receive this award. I have a lot of passion for the industry and our ability to work together. I view our work together as a rising tide that lifts all boats. Together we are a stronger ally for our suppliers and customers," he concluded. ■

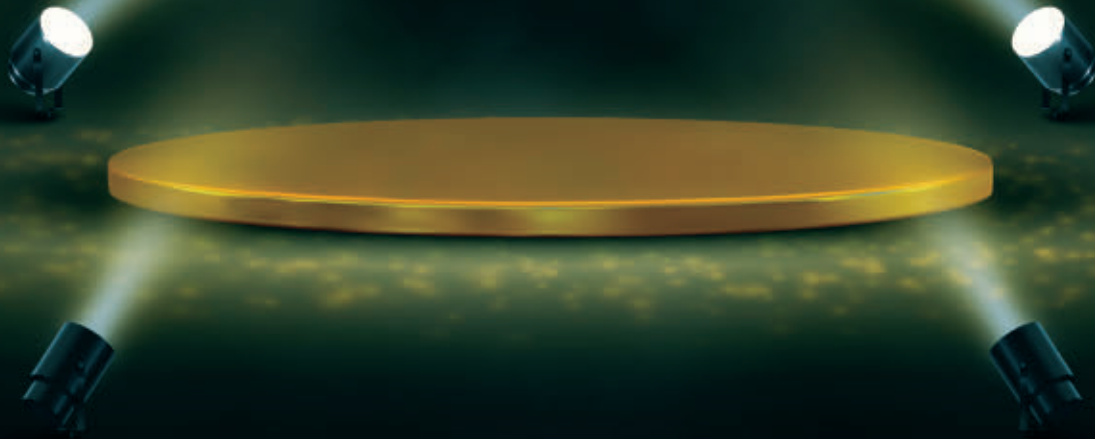
*Katarsky is a freelance business writer based in Philadelphia. She can be reached at [ckatarsky@gmail.com](mailto:ckatarsky@gmail.com).*



# ANNUAL AWARD WINNERS

In addition to the Arthur W. Hooper Achievement Award, NAED recognizes the following who have made outstanding contributions to both the channel and the Association.

*by Carol Katarsky*





**DISTRIBUTOR  
DISTINGUISHED  
SERVICE AWARD**

**PHIL HALE**

*Elliott Electric Supply  
and NacSpace*



During the past decade-plus, the channel has undergone a massive tech-

nological evolution—in both the products it sells and how companies harness technology to run their own companies. And with the ongoing digital transformation, the ability to understand what new tech is coming, and what it could mean for distribution, is only becoming more important.

For an example of how to navigate these technological changes, look no further than Phil Hale, this year's winner of the Distributor Distinguished Service Award. Hale is the chief information officer of Elliott Electric Supply and president of NacSpace, a digital services center, both in Nacogdoches, Texas. He's been with Elliott Electric since 1987 and has been responsible for the company's in-house developed software and systems for most of that time. Hale also has found time to serve in many other capacities throughout the industry, including serving on the board of IDEA (including a term as chair), and he's currently on the NAED board as well as chair of

NAED's Education & Research Foundation.

That's a lot for any one person, but Hale said he finds the experiences he gets from his work with NAED and other organizations to be invaluable. "Collaborating with industry peers and leaders, the networking events and conferences—all of these are opportunities to share our experiences and

"Where IDEA is today is significantly due to Phil's efforts," said Wes Smith, president and CEO of NAED and a prior chair of IDEA. "He's the CIO of a company that's grown 15% a year for a decade but he still finds time to show up, be present, and help lead our industry to outcomes that are relevant to distributors and manufacturers." This takes incredi-

fits not only us, as distributors, but also manufacturers, manufacturer reps, our customers, etc. But it takes all of us to make that change and to help all of us."

Hale said he sees a number of challenges facing the industry but notes that strategic adoption of tech and data can turn them into opportunities. For example, he

**IN THEIR  
WORDS**

**There are a lot of things we can do through standards alone that will reduce costs in the channel and improve operational efficiency. And I believe we can [integrate systems] through APIs that will automate the calls and emails that people are sending now to help with inventory optimization, mitigate disruption, [improve] warehouse ops, etc. We can push forward, meet the challenges of today, and come out stronger in the long run.**

*—Phil Hale, Elliott Electric Supply & NacSpace*

knowledge," he said. "And I hope I've been able to positively impact the industry in return."

Of that, there's no doubt. "His dedication to the company and to the industry that he served is extraordinary," noted Bill Elliott, founder and chairman of Elliott Electric. "He sets a high bar; it's just part of his nature to get things done, work hard, and expect the same of his people. Elliott added that Hale has also done a lot to improve data standards, all with the goal of helping companies improve their user experience and reduce errors.

ble talent, passion, energy, and commitment.

Of his own efforts, Hale said, "The main goals were better standards and reducing friction in the channel—that has been most beneficial and rewarding for me." He noted that the channel has faced a number of tech disruptions over the past 10 years, which allowed it to rethink and improve its systems.

"To keep it the channel of choice, you have to reduce costs, add services, and make the experience better," he said. "You can do a lot for your own corporation, but if I put my 'industry' cap on, it bene-

said he expects the industry will continue to face market pricing pressures, a continuation of the digital transformation, and a need for better integration of systems.

"There are a lot of things we can do through standards alone that will reduce costs in the channel and improve operational efficiency," he said. "And I believe we can [integrate systems] through APIs that will automate the calls and emails that people are sending now to help with inventory optimization, mitigate disruption, [improve] warehouse ops, etc." He added that these

steps can also make the industry more appealing for younger workers who might not have the channel top of mind as a career option. “We can push forward, meet the challenges of today, and come out stronger in the long run,” he noted.

That optimism for what the channel can achieve and his faith in how tech can help meet those goals are infectious. More importantly, he has the ability to share and explain those ideas to others. “Phil has the extraordinary gift of being able to evaluate and, if necessary, apply technologies to the business,” said John Cain, CEO emeritus and strategic advisor, Wiseway Supply, Florence, Ky. “His abilities and passion for the electrical distribution industry have made him an extremely valuable resource to NAED and IDEA. His efforts will impact our industry’s future.”

Smith said that Hale’s background is in tech, but he avoids the stereotypes of that field. “I appreciate a tech guy who is also a thoughtful, pragmatic business leader, not a technologist for tech’s sake,” he explained. “He’s very thoughtful. Tech people—and I include myself so I am not casting stones here—can come off analytical, but Phil is warm and personable, both unique gifts.”

Hale noted that he was honored and humbled when he received news of the award. “There are so many people who do a lot

for the industry. I try to do what I can, so I was a little bit shocked at the news,” he acknowledged. “I’m grateful to NAED for their support and belief in me. It inspires me to push forward more and help in any way I can to better the industry.”

### ASSOCIATE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

#### **BILL WALTZ** *Atkore*



Bill Waltz, CEO and president of Atkore and this year’s Associate

Distinguished Service Award winner, has long been a fixture at industry events, having served at various times on the boards of NAED and IDEA, on the Board of Governors for NEMA, and in countless other roles.

He began his career with stints at GE and Deloitte Management and served in various executive roles at recycling and water treatment companies before joining Atkore in 2013. Named president and CEO in 2018, he has led the company through a growth period while simultaneously reaffirming the company’s commitment to being a good corporate citizen. Under his leadership, Atkore has won numerous awards recognizing its efforts, including the EPA and Department

of Energy’s Energy Star Partner of the Year Award, and numerous “best workplaces” awards.

That would be enough on their plate for many people, but Waltz has consistently found time to further serve both NAED and the industry in ways large and small, formal and informal.

“Throughout his service to NAED, I do not recall a time when Bill was not willing to share of his time, talent, and resources,” said John Cain, CEO emeritus and strategic advisor, Wiseway Supply, Florence, Ky., who served on the NAED board with Waltz. “He was open and willing to respectfully share his perspective to advance the goals of NAED,” Cain continued, noting that Waltz didn’t hesitate when asked to serve on NAED’s search committee for a new CEO, an eight-month process that required a significant commitment of time and energy. “It is difficult to express how blessed NAED and its members are to have Bill’s leadership.”

Wes Smith, NAED president and CEO, concurred. “[Bill] is present in almost every significant leadership level of this industry. And he’s not just ‘present’; he’s also leading—and that’s on top of leading his company. In terms of being involved and giving back to the industry, no one is more deserving of this award,” Smith said.

Waltz said his involvement in industry groups has been both personally

and professionally fulfilling. “This isn’t news, but the electrical industry is different. It’s filled with good, down-to-earth people that you want to partner with and do business with,” he said, adding that people in this industry—even competitors—are so willing to help one another because they get so much back from it. “Whether it’s through the conferences, being on a board, or working with people, you see so many good people volunteering their time to help the industry. Getting different perspectives makes the overall industry better, and we as individual companies, and people, can benefit as well.”

But Waltz gets fulfillment from the work as well. “It’s fun to be in an industry where we’re helping to electrify the world. We’re doing the right thing for society—reducing carbon, improving infrastructure. It’s good to know we’re contributing to that,” he said.

At a time when all parts of the industry are challenged to be more efficient and adapt to a digitized environment, Waltz’s leadership has been instrumental to the success of the channel as a whole and Atkore specifically.

“Bill is one of the smartest people you’ll meet—maybe without ever realizing you just met one of the smartest you’ll ever meet. He’s a humble, thoughtful, and incredibly hardworking individual,” said Smith. He recounted a

meeting when someone asked about Atkore's carbon footprint and Waltz was able to immediately respond in depth and with specific figures. "That is a unique quality in a leader. Not all CEOs have that depth of information on hand," Smith continued.

Waltz can leaven the focus on data with a personal touch. David Oldfather, president and CEO of IDEA, particularly noted Waltz's engaging and personable leadership style. "He downplays his intelligence with self-deprecating humor, which works to promote his ideas at the same time that it makes him very approachable," Oldfather said. "[He has] a unique combination of intelligence, thoughtfulness, and approachability. He is a perfect example of a leader who speaks with the confidence of someone who thinks they're right—but listens as if they might be wrong."

That combination of expertise, approachability, and a commitment to giving back earned Waltz the Associate Service Award, which he called a highlight of his career. "I'm honored; it's humbling, gratifying, and motivating," he said. But he was quick to acknowledge the support he's received at Atkore. "Part of the reason I'm getting this award is because of the strength of the team I work with," he added. "I can spend the time on NAED and other external work because our team is so talented."

### INDUSTRY AWARD OF MERIT



**Zekelman**  
BELIEVE IN WHAT YOU BUILD™

In an industry based largely on the power of relationships, Zekelman Industries embodies that ethos.

The company—really a family of companies, including Wheatland Tube, Western Tube, Picoma, Atlas Tube, and Z Modular—dates back to 1877 and is the largest independent steel pipe and tube manufacturer in North America. Committed to domestic manufacturing and the use of steel produced in the United States, the company is also the only fully integrated, multifamily housing developer. But beyond its product quality, the company's distributor partners cite the ease of working with the company as what truly sets it apart.

"They are very responsive to our marketplace needs, have innovative programs [for their distributors], and keep us competitive," said Charles "Skip" Loeb, president of Loeb Electric in Columbus, Ohio.

John Burke, president and CEO of Steiner Electric in Itasca, Ill., noted that his company works primarily with Wheatland Tube, a Zekelman company. "What makes them stand out is their willing-

ness to collaborate and share best practices and internal resources with their distributor partners," Burke said. "They are a progressive company, willing to invest in the future as demonstrated by continuous investment in new manufacturing facilities, process improvements, and leading-edge technology to better serve the market and their channel partners."

That commitment to their distributor partners is why Zekelman Industries has earned this year's Industry Award of Merit.

"We're flattered [by this award]. It's an honor to be recognized," said Jim Hays, president, Electrical, Zekelman Industries. "We strive to be best in class under the umbrella of NAED and other industries we participate in. Across the entire organization, we believe in doing the right thing, for the right reasons. It's part of our DNA."

He said that the award confirms the company's ongoing commitment to the distributor channel as well as "the efforts of our distributor partners to promote our value-added products and services to their end clients."

Hays added that Zekelman Industries benefits greatly from its distributor partnerships. "We value the rock-solid commitment that our distributors make on our behalf in good and bad times," he said, noting that the company's distributors have embraced Zekelman's digital strat-

egy. For example, Zekelman's Automated Inventory Management (AIM) program is designed to drive higher overall service levels. "It's an example of the things we do together that makes being part of this channel extremely rewarding," he added.

From the distributor's perspective, Burke agreed with that assessment. "[Zekelman is] proactive in relationship building, sharing resources, best practices, engaging in technology that improves transaction efficiency, and dedicated to continuous improvement," he said. "They consistently operate with a high level of integrity and their employees continue to convey the essence of the company vision in the form of a company persona."

"They clearly stand out in their commitment to the industry through continuous investments in facilities, people, processes, and technology to enhance the end-user customer experience through collaboration with selected channel partners," Burke continued.

Asked about the near-term future of the channel, Hays is optimistic about both Zekelman's future and the channel as a whole. "We see challenges as opportunities for innovation," he said. "There are a lot of bright people working to seize the moment." He noted that the reshoring of manufacturing in the United States has required some distributors—across



industries—to realign their supply chain to meet and exceed customer expectations. “In our own channel, speed continues to win—continuing to drive a higher service level will put us in a better position than those we compete with,” he added.

Zekelman recently completed a million-square-foot state-of-the-art steel conduit production facility that will deliver higher quality and service to bet-

ter support its distributor partners. But Hays said he also sees partnerships and organizations like NAED as a key to the industry’s collective success.

“The beauty of the NAED members is their ability to turn on a dime and meet these challenges head on,” he said. “They have a lot of entrepreneurial drive, which makes it a very rewarding industry to work in.”

He noted that the fel-

lowship fostered among NAED members is more than a nice work perk: It creates very tangible benefits for both sides of the distribution equation. “Global companies can sometimes lose sight of their local partners, but NAED events help us stay aligned and drive best practices that are mutually beneficial,” Hays added.

That’s a feeling shared by Zekelman’s distributors. “We have a direct line to

their leadership team,” explained Loeb. “[Hays] will take my phone calls when we need them and respond accordingly—which isn’t necessarily the case at every manufacturer. They’re very connected to the industry and their customers. They like real partnerships.” ■

*Katarsky is a freelance business writer based in Philadelphia. She can be reached at [ckatarsky@gmail.com](mailto:ckatarsky@gmail.com).*

## WOMEN IN INDUSTRY / PROFILE

# 2024 Trailblazer Announced



**Farrah Mittel**  
PRESIDENT,  
SCHAEDLER YESCO  
DISTRIBUTION

**F**ARRAH MITTEL IS THE PRESIDENT OF SCHAEDLER Yesco Distribution in Harrisburg, Pa. Her journey at Schaedler Yesco includes marketing, new business development, branch management, and sales management, giving her a broad view of the business and a strong vision for the family- and employee-owned company.

A graduate of Penn State with a B.S. in Public Policy, Farrah understands both the idiosyncrasies and opportunities in working with government entities. Her insight into this specific channel has helped guide her pragmatic and process-driven approach to business and her overall management style. Farrah aims to provide the tools and support needed to cultivate problem-solving and innovation throughout the company.

Farrah is an active member of Vistage, is a current member of the Penn State Harrisburg Board of Advisors, is a board member of NAED since 2020, is chair of the NAED Finance Committee, and serves on the board of supplyForce and is a member of its compensation committee. Farrah has also served on the Harrisburg Chamber of Commerce board and proudly lends her time and experience as a founding advisory board member to iBelongHere, an organization whose mission is to influence the mindsets and actions of people to value differences to create stronger, more inclusive workplace environments and communities.



# SWEETEN THE DEAL

The outlook for 2024 looks good for electrical distributors who tap rebate dollars to sweeten lighting upgrade proposals.

by **Craig DiLouie**

**O**FFERED BY UTILITIES AND energy efficiency organizations, commercial lighting rebates have endured as a demand driver for energy-efficient lighting in existing buildings. The outlook for 2024 appears very positive for electrical distributors who tap these dollars to sweeten lighting upgrade proposals. In this article, we'll examine a snapshot of rebates in 2024 and major trends.

Over the decades, these programs

have evolved in terms of geographic availability and what technologies they favored. In recent years, commercial lighting rebates have proliferated, holding at a penetration of roughly 80% of the United States, according to rebate fulfillment firm BriteSwitch. In 2023, that included FirstEnergy in Ohio, which reopened a commercial lighting rebate after state legislation discontinued rebates at the end of 2020.

The 2024 commercial lighting



## INDUSTRY INFO

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[NAED.org/epec-lighting](http://NAED.org/epec-lighting)

rebate outlook suggests that programs are beginning to react to LED market saturation, a likely cause of softening demand for rebates. According to BriteSwitch, 10% to 25% of programs traditionally ran out of funding before they ended; in 2023, this was less than 5%. In response, by the end of the year, about one-fifth of programs offered bonus rebates of 10% to 100% for some of the most common upgrades, with some of these accelerated

rebates continuing into the first quarter of 2024. Additionally, average LED and lighting control rebates per qualifying product are generally increasing in 2024.

"Today, lighting rebates are as important as ever," said BriteSwitch President Leendert Jan Enthoven. "Since all the early adopters and the early majority have already upgraded to energy-efficient lighting, the potential projects left behind are the late majority and laggards. These segments take much more convincing, and the incentives are key to getting them to ultimately make the switch. Electrical distributors who know how to take advantage of these incentives are more likely to see success in a softening lighting retrofit

## ABOUT REBATES

Energy efficiency rebates are offered in many utility territories in North America. Why? Paying customers to use electrical energy more efficiently is typically more cost-effective than building new power supply.

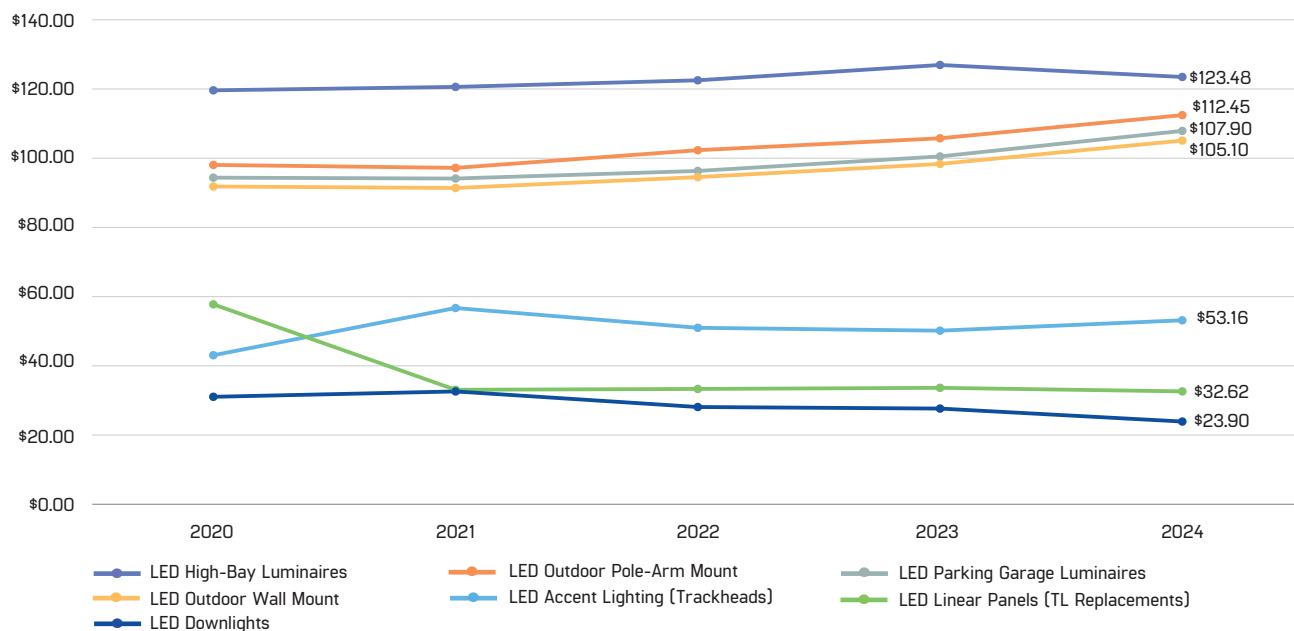
The majority of rebates are prescriptive, meaning a nominal cash amount is awarded as an incentive to install a qualifying energy-efficient product, with the amount capped at a maximum percentage of the product's cost. While midstream ("instant") rebates have grown in popularity by shifting the rebate to the point of sale, the most common prescriptive rebate remains the downstream rebate, where the owner is paid upon approval and installation.

Lighting has always been a leading product category in rebate programs, as it traditionally yielded a relatively simple path to substantial energy savings. By reducing initial cost and improving ROI, owner investment in energy-efficient lighting becomes more compelling. —C.D.



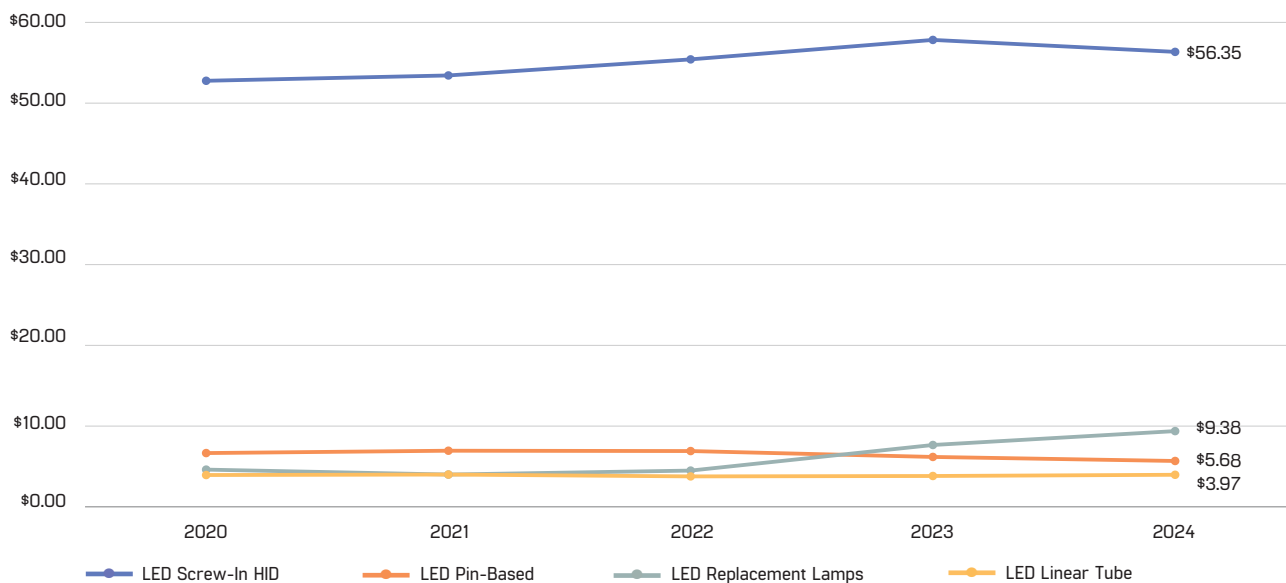
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### Average LED Luminaire Product Rebates, 2020-2024



Average popular LED luminaire rebates in the United States and Canada, as of February 2024. Source: BriteSwitch RebatePro for Lighting.

### Average LED Lamp Product Rebates, 2020-2024



Average popular LED lamp rebates in the United States and Canada, as of February 2024. Source: BriteSwitch RebatePro for Lighting.

market like we're experiencing."

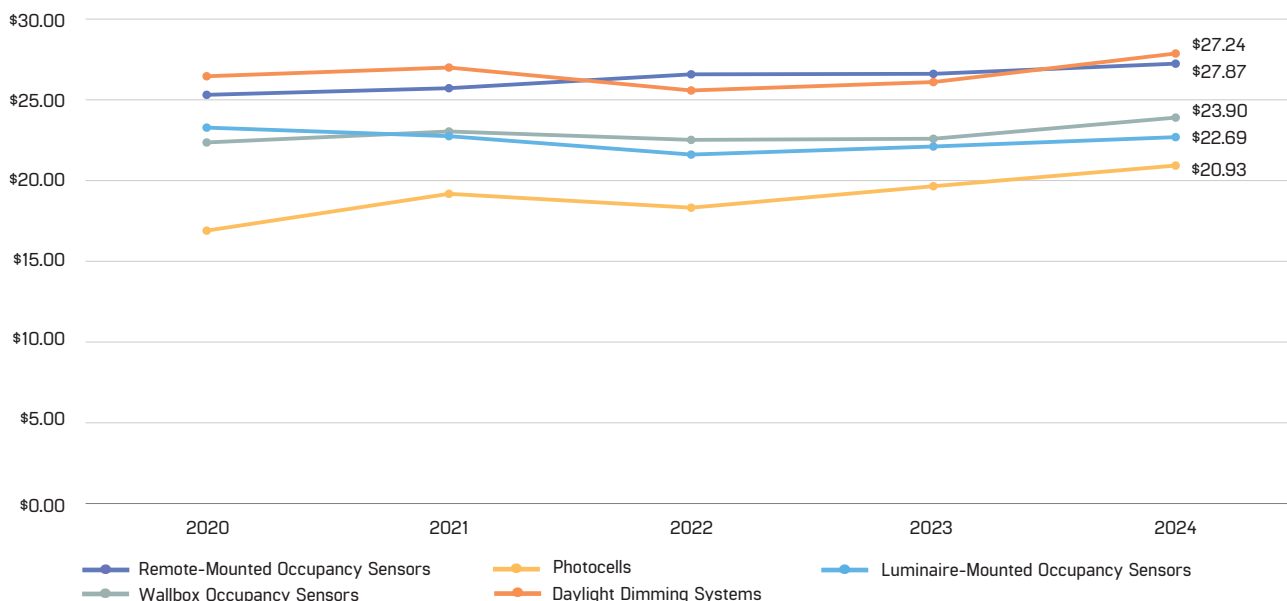
• **Lighting:** In LED lighting, the most popular rebates continue to target downlights, high bays, parking garage luminaires, troffers/linear

panels, outdoor, and traditional retrofits, as shown in the charts on these pages—in short, a wide variety of lamps and luminaires covering the large majority of applications.

"In the early days of LEDs, we saw the rebate amounts dropping significantly, 10% to 20% each year," Ent-hoven said. "Since 2021, that decline has flattened out, and some catego-



## Average Lighting Control Rebates, 2020-2024



Average popular lighting control rebates in the United States and Canada, as of February 2024. Source: BriteSwitch RebatePro for Lighting.

ries have even increased in some years. For 2024, for the LED category as a whole, rebates have increased by 2% across all of North America.”

Note that many programs phased out rebates for general-service replacement lamps—e.g., A19, PAR lamps—in 2023, following federal legislation phasing out the majority of remaining halogen lamps. However, a number of incentives are persisting, according to BriteSwitch.

In recent years, horticultural lighting rebates enjoyed rapid adoption and standardization as a specialized category. In 2024, nearly 650 utilities are offering an incentive, with the average North American rebate being about \$100 per luminaire.

• **Lighting controls:** The 2024 rebate picture for lighting controls is even more positive, with substantial rebates available for wall-box, remote-mounted, and luminaire-mounted occupancy sensors; photocells; and daylight dimming systems, as shown in the chart above.

“In 2024, the average rebate for

controls increased by 5% across North America,” noted Enthoven. “The incentives for basic controls like remote occupancy sensors or photocells have always been relatively high compared with the cost, which should make them almost an automatic standard upsell whenever quoting a lighting job in an area with rebates.”

He noted that some programs are starting to tie controls to LED lighting rebates as a requirement to ensure substantial energy savings. For example, he said Baltimore Gas & Electric is requiring that new luminaires in most applications be connected to occupancy/vacancy sensor controls.

Traditionally incentivized via typically more complex custom rebate programs, networked lighting controls began to be incentivized with prescriptive rebates starting around 2016, the year the DesignLights Consortium launched a Qualified Products List for Networked Lighting Controls. Enthoven pointed out that these programs are continuing to standardize,

with 53% of programs promoting networked lighting controls now offering a prescriptive rebate.

Among these prescriptive rebates, 70% offer the incentive as a rebate adder per LED luminaire, with an average of \$211 per luminaire installed and controlled. The most common luminaire types with additional networked control rebates are trof-fers, high bays, and low bays.

### Getting Rebates

Including rebates in project quotes can help obtain customer approval by reducing initial cost and improving ROI. Securing rebates, however, requires administration. The rebate must be identified and understood, paperwork must be submitted, proposed products must be qualified as eligible, preapproval must be gained, and the project may be inspected to verify installation. Enthoven said the rebate process takes an average of 12 steps over five months to complete, requiring either in-house resources or outsourcing.

To get the most out of local programs, learn their requirements while keeping tabs on policy changes and funding levels. Note that rebates are not guaranteed or may pay a lower-than-expected amount. Consider signing up as a Trade Ally to benefit from market visibility and access to training and other resources; some programs require it.

In 2024, rebates are certain to remain a driver for adoption of energy-efficient lighting and controls in exist-

ing buildings. As LED saturation increases, however, rebates are likely to evolve to continue achieving substantial energy savings under these new market conditions.

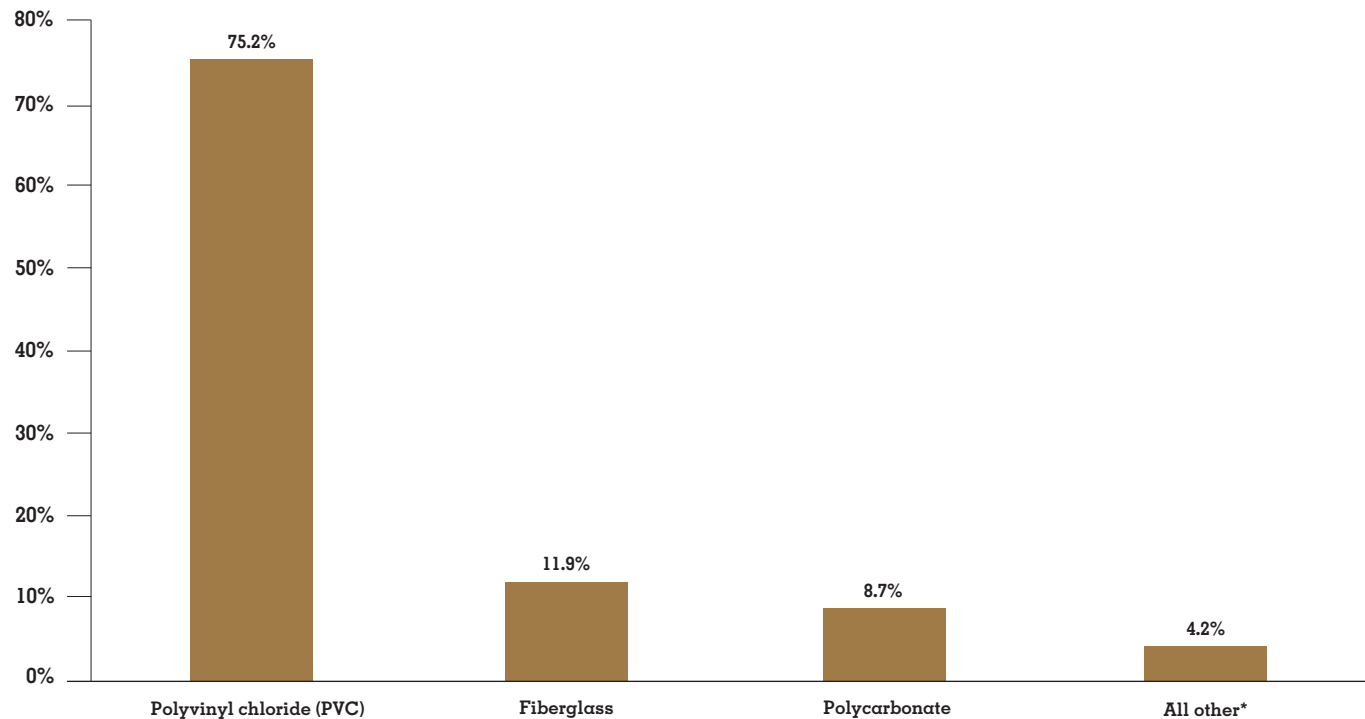
In the future, rebates may shift toward high-efficiency LED lighting, upgrading older LED installations (potentially with a \$/W instead of a per-product rebate), lighting redesign, more strongly tying lighting to controls, HVAC integration, and specialized applications like UV disin-

fection, data, and tunable lighting. “If the past few years are any indication of the future, I still see lighting rebates being an integral part of energy efficiency programs,” Enthoven said. “We see no signs of them slowing down, and instead see them evolving to match the marketplace.” ■

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NONMETALLIC BOXES BY MATERIAL

12-MONTH DOLLAR SHARE ENDING DECEMBER 2023



NONMETALLIC BOXES—SHARE CHANGE BY MATERIAL  
12-MONTH DOLLAR SALES ENDING DECEMBER 2023 VS. ONE YEAR AGO

|                          |      |
|--------------------------|------|
| Polyvinyl chloride (PVC) | -4.7 |
| Fiberglass               | 2.5  |
| Polycarbonate            | -2.2 |
| All other*               | 2.4  |

\*Consists of plastic, phenolic, and NORYL. Epicor's Industry Data Analytics tracking information is based on sales from a representative sample of full-line electrical distributors located throughout the United States. For more information, call 512-278-5800, email [epicorindustryanalytics@epicor.com](mailto:epicorindustryanalytics@epicor.com), or visit [www.epicor.com/en-us/business-need/sales-and-marketing/vista-information-services/](http://www.epicor.com/en-us/business-need/sales-and-marketing/vista-information-services/).

### 1. Color Lenses for Keystone Bullet Floodlights

**Keystone Technologies's** LED bullet floodlight fixtures offer functional design with energy-efficient lighting and versatility, including field-adjustable Power and Color Select technology and a built-in photocell. Change the beam spread, optic lenses, and new color lenses (offered in red, blue, and green) using the twist-on/off glass lens cap and included tool. Learn more at [keystonetech.com](http://keystonetech.com).

### 2. Arrow Hart EZ Link Modular Devices

**Eaton's** Arrow Hart EZ Link modular devices enable installers to wire a connector during rough-in and easily and quickly install the device at trim-out. Designed for high-rise office buildings, hotels, and other large projects, the modular design makes replacements and future enhancements easy as well. Learn more at [eaton.com](http://eaton.com).

### 3. Decora Smart Wi-Fi Outdoor Plug-In Switch

**Leviton's** Decora Smart Wi-Fi Outdoor Plug-In Switch is the first outdoor plug-in to support Matter, which offers convenience and control for users to remotely manage outdoor lighting, decorations, fans, fountain pumps, and more via the My Leviton app, alongside Leviton's other smart home devices. Learn more at [leviton.com](http://leviton.com).

### 4. EZ-Hang Box

**Orbit Industries's** EZ-Hang Boxes speed up the installation process for suspended boxes by replacing the traditional bottom center knockout with a thru-hole that accepts  $\frac{3}{8}$ " threaded rod. The boxes don't need a washer, come with a 10-32 ground screw, and are compatible with Orbit's BCHS Plates. Learn more at [orbitelectric.com](http://orbitelectric.com).

### 5. All-Weather Terra Drum

**Acclaim Lighting's** Terra Drum series of rugged, all-weather, in-ground, drive-over-ready-rated fixtures is available in 15W, 30W, and 60W versions. The fixtures have a drive-over rating of up to 6,000 lbs. and feature Terra-Tilt adjusters that allow users to fine-tune the beam position once the fixture is in place without compromising environmental protection. Learn more at [acclaimlighting.com](http://acclaimlighting.com).

### 6. RFBA Series Floor Box Collection

**Legrand's** RFBA Series of Floor Boxes are versatile recessed activation solutions that provide power, communication, and/or A/V services to open-space areas or directly to workstations. They come in various sizes and depths, utilize FloorPort series covers, and can be installed in a variety of floor coverings. Learn more at [legrand.us](http://legrand.us).



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## Distributor Doings



Jason Stein

sales and marketing in 2018.

*Crawford, A Sonepar Company*, Houston, announced a new organizational structure following the combination of Crawford and Irby C&I:

**Mike Font** was promoted to senior vice president, South; **Ron Martin** was promoted to senior vice president, West; **Matt Berns** serves as a regional vice president in the East; **Josh Law** serves as regional vice president, North; **Chris Mitchell** serves as a regional vice president in the East; **Bart Perez** serves as regional vice president in the South; and **Brian Young** serves as regional vice president in the West.

Several changes within Crawford's headquarters were also required to support the new structure:

**Wayland Boozer** is vice president of operations; **Anne Marie Greely** is

**Jason Stein** was named chief information officer at *Border States*, Fargo, N.D. He joined the company in 1995 as a management trainee and was named executive vice president of

director of operations for the West and South; **Collie Griffith** is director of inventory for the entire footprint; **Mary Newton** is director of operations for the North and East; **Ryan Selman** is director of pricing for the entire footprint; and **John Tingle** is director of digital transformation for the entire footprint.

## Manufacturer Moves



Steve Boccadoro

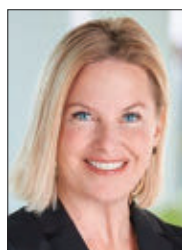


Chris Fluit

years, most recently as the business unit manager for Eaton's Electrical Engineering Services and Critical Power and Digital Infrastructure businesses in Canada.

*Eaton's Steve Boccadoro* has announced his retirement. He joined Eaton in 1987 as an internal auditor; served as senior vice president, corporate sales and marketing; and has served as senior vice president and general manager in Canada since 2014.

**Chris Fluit** has stepped into Boccadoro's role. He has served Eaton for more than 20



Pam Hoppel

and general manager at Kidde.

At *LEDVANCE*, **Lynnette Schaeffer** is the new director of training overseeing the LIGHTPOINT training program. She joined Van Meter Inc. in

**Pam Hoppel** was appointed president of *Legrand AV*. Prior to joining Legrand, she was vice president of trade and vice president of retail at Delta Faucet. Before that, she was president

## PASSINGS



Adrian Romero

**Adrian Romero**, 54, business development/regional manager at *Satco*, died on Jan. 11.

Over the years, Romero has also served as sales director of indus-

try and distribution—North America at *Cembre Group* and senior sales manager at *TE Connectivity*; held several managerial positions at *Molex*; and served more than 10 years at *EESCO*, a division of *WESCO Distribution*.

He is survived by his wife, Stacy, and three children.

1998, evolved through leadership roles in global lighting firms, then entered the training side in 2020.

*OmniCable* promoted **Justin Wolf** to western regional vice president. He has been with the company for 14 years, serving as the Denver regional manager for the past eight years.

Also, **Gary Young** retired from *OmniCable* in February after more than 30 years. He joined as a management trainee in 1993 and has held various roles, most recently as the Boston sales manager.



Jeff Anderson

*Service Wire's Jeff Anderson* was promoted to the new role of business development manager, western region. He has more than six years of experience, most recently as a strate-

gic account manager. ■



Send your people news items to [mbyers@naed.org](mailto:mbyers@naed.org).

## A JOB WELL DONE



Larry LaFreniere

Lahey's President's Council since 2019.

**Larry LaFreniere**, CEO of *Electric Supply Center*, Burlington, Mass., was appointed to the board of trustees of *Lahey Hospital & Medical Center*, serving on the finance and philanthropy committees.

He has been serving on

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| <b>NAED/Corporate Partners</b>                     | <a href="http://naed.org">naed.org</a>  | BC     |
| <b>NAED/Economic &amp; Industry Sector Outlook</b> | <a href="http://naed.org/outlook">naed.org/outlook</a>  | 38, 39 |
| <b>NAED/Leadership Development Program</b>         | <a href="http://naed.org/leadership">naed.org/leadership</a>  | 32     |
| <b>NAED/Leveraging Data</b>                        | <a href="http://naed.org/program-enrollments">naed.org/program-enrollments</a>  | 13     |
| <b>NAED/National Meeting</b>                       | <a href="http://naed.org/national-meeting">naed.org/national-meeting</a>  | 31     |
| <b>NAED/Upcoming Events</b>                        | <a href="http://naed.org/calendar">naed.org/calendar</a>  | IFC    |
| <b>NAED/Women in Industry</b>                      | <a href="http://naed.org/womeninindustry">naed.org/womeninindustry</a>  | 8      |
| <b>SATCO</b>                                       | <a href="http://satco.com">satco.com</a>  | 5      |
| <b>tED magazine/distributED</b>                    | <a href="http://tEDmag.com/podcast">tEDmag.com/podcast</a>  | 44     |

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