

electricITY

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New
Product
Guide
INSIDE!

Sometimes it takes a tragedy to learn just how lucky you really are.

By Ken Gallagher, CEO at Paramount EO

TWhen we lost our roof on Memorial Day, we realized we had something so much more important—we had a family of co-workers that was stronger than the steel I-Beam that bent and twisted and gave way to undue stress. The team that showed up, that wouldn't give up, that brought their energy and can-do attitudes to the task of triaging and rebuilding—that team is what makes us special, makes us Paramount EO. That team does not cave to the added pressures of complex logistics, facility flaws, massive cleanup efforts, time consuming inventory management, traffic and vehicular obstacles, customer expectations, or scattered work conditions. Instead, they come together. They support each other with their presence and their minds and their muscles – reminding us we are not alone, doing what it takes to get us back in business, and solving problems as quickly as they arise.

We knew we had a good crew working for us. Many of our employees joined us fresh out of school (some even started working in our warehouse during high school), others came on board as the result of a friend or relative encouraging them to do so, and some just heard about us through the industry grapevine and decided to come check us out. We have always had some combination of father-son, mother-son, husband-wife, sisters, brothers, cousins, best friends, etc. in our fold and that has always made coming to work feel like more than just showing up for a job. Being a family-owned and operated independent distributor, relationships have always been an important part of our company culture. What we didn't expect was for so many of our employees to show up just to stand in the rain with us in a show of support as we listened to the Woodridge Fire Chief explain that about 15,000 square feet of roofing had caved in, crushing all the material beneath it. And then for those people, and more to show up the next day, and the day after that, and so on to rescue their notes, books, computers, and everything else they

needed to continue doing their jobs from wherever we could get them set up to work. Now that's loyalty. You can't put a price tag on that.

And it's not just within our walls that we work to engender a sense of family and community for the electrical industry. Through participation in conferences, events, fundraisers, educational seminars, training workshops, industry forums and more, we are constantly out there networking, sharing information, and learning about the people and companies that are a part of our channel so that we can be the absolute best at serving our customers' needs.



For the past 3 years, I have chaired the NAED Lake Michigan Club (a group open to all manufacturers, rep agencies, and distributors in the Midwest) annual conference event planning so that we could help our supplier partners, and even our competition think, learn and perform better for the clients we all serve. We've dedicated ourselves to topics such as Agile and Lean Construction,

Innovation, Digital Transformation, Leadership, Adversity, Company Culture, and more to stay apace with the changes and challenges we all face in the extremely competitive distribution environment.

We've used what we have learned to help countless customers value engineer to save time and money on their own projects, in turn creating a trusted bond and healthy repeat business cycle. We would rather spend more time getting to know our customers' pain points and preferences so that we can delight with our solutions, than take on hordes of orders from unknown entities and simply move material from point A to point B without adding any value along the way (#WeAreNotAmazon).

It's this mentality and our commitment from the C-suite to the warehouse worker mopping the floor (which

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sometimes is one and the same!) that serves as our guiding principles. It's why in the midst of the chaos of losing the ability to service customers out of our main hub for nearly 4 weeks during the busiest time of the year, we worked tirelessly to not only continue doing business, but also find a way to use the tragedy to learn and grow and reinvent ourselves.

With our Chicago branch stepping up to handle nearly triple the deliveries overnight, and our drivers offering to pinch hit in different locations despite having to tuck on an additional 2 hour drive home at the end of each day, and warehouse staff that shifted both locations and hours, including extra weekend hours we were heartened by the extraordinary lengths our teams were willing to go to in order to continue to service our clients and get our hub back in the game.

At the same time, our New Lenox branch not only absorbed more than a dozen employees all at once, sharing office space (in some cases even their own desk!), internet bandwidth, printers, parking and more, they actually came to relish the new interactions between sales and our relocated switchgear team—sharing knowledge, tips, and tools; local showroom staff got to meet the entire accounting department and gained new appreciation for the paperwork and research involved in processing every order, and the warehouse crew got to share best practices for picking and packing orders.

Even our lighting department, which was invited to take over one of our gracious rep agency's spacious and well-appointed training room (#ChicagoLightworksRocks!), was able to use the experience to their advantage, forming stronger partnerships and sharing more openly their strategies for staying organized and effectively communicating with customers and partners throughout the job lifecycle.

When our friends at #Chicago Lightworks called to offer us the space it started a chain reaction and others started to reach out as well. To be a part of an industry in which channel partners, vendors, and even our competitors were offering to help in any way possible is heartwarming to say the least. Witnessing our employees' dedication and willingness to work even harder than they already do to get us back on our feet, makes all of the challenges we face as owners, the worry over whether we made the right strategic decisions, if we are providing the right services, creating a climate of growth and opportunity for our employees, and delivering on our promises to ourselves, our team, and

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our clients, totally worthwhile.

The reality is, no amount of money or job perks can compete with a boss that truly values an employee's contribution and makes them feel like they matter. And that only happens when owners themselves are willing to work as hard as everyone else, do whatever it takes from mopping floors and loading pipe onto a truck, to sharing a desk and greeting employees and customers with a smile and a kind word.

Having our roof collapse has been incredibly stressful on a personal level and absolutely horrendous from a business perspective. It's hard to calculate the actual losses in terms of dollars and cents, from lost orders to damaged inventory and business assets, and most crucially the impact to our reputation when we disappointed clients as we persevered to restore reliable delivery service. But the affirmation that we have created a company that provides so much more than just a paycheck for our employees, that is truly priceless and will no doubt pay dividends as we propel ourselves forward into a brighter future. ●

The Will Group's COO Acquires Industrial Electric Supply

Jessica Ashley Garmon, COO & General Counsel of The Will Group, announced that she has acquired Industrial Electric Supply located in Burr Ridge Illinois.

Industrial Electric Supply (IES), founded in 1977, has been a privately-owned full line Electrical Distributor servicing the utility, construction, commercial, residential, and industrial markets throughout the Chicagoland Area.

"We are all very excited to acquire IES. It will fit nicely with our existing companies and our strategy to grow our business," said Jessica Ashley Garmon, CEO and President.

The daily operations of IES are directed by Jessica Ashley Garmon, CEO and President. She is delighted to have Michael Wall, Vice President of Sales and Operations and Michael Heersink, General Manager join her team. ●

The Agency Announces Opening

By Mark P. Gibson and Dave Anderson, Managing Partners, The Agency



We are excited and proud to announce the opening of a new agency; The Agency: Sales Thru Solutions.

With the trust and support of Southwire, Philips/Signify and EATON, we are ready to serve the electrical distribution and end user market.

By design, every line that we represent offers labor savings, safety and energy solutions.

Our new business opened July 1, 2019 with an office and warehouse located at 775 Mittel Drive, Wood Dale, Illinois.

Visit our website at www.theagencysales.com for company information and contacts.

We look forward to "re-introducing" ourselves and our manufacturer's advantages very soon! ●

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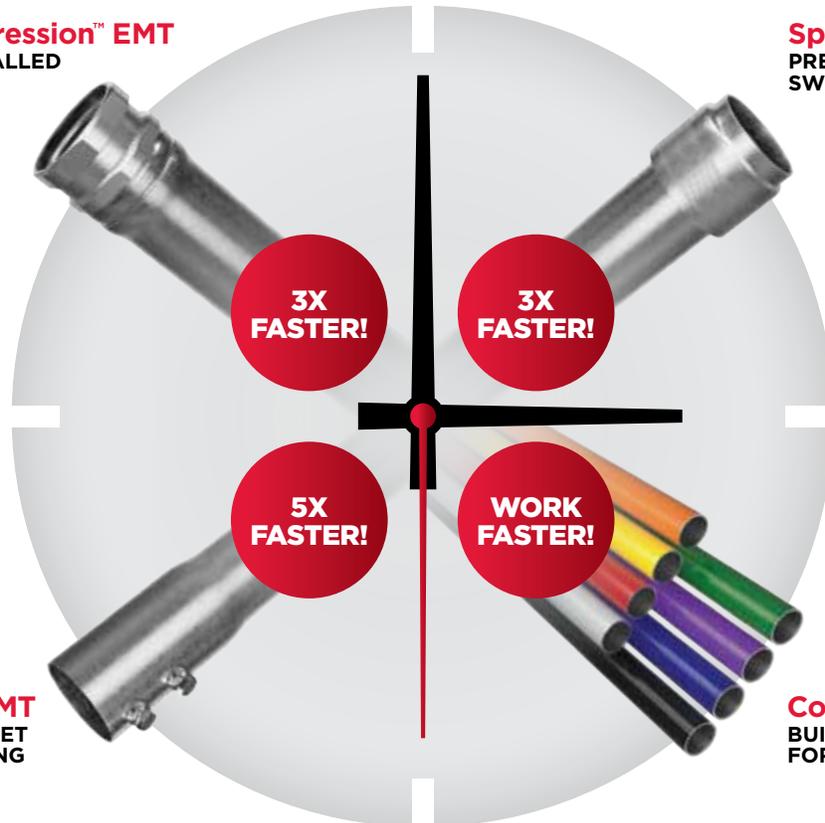
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