

E-BIZ FORUM REPORT

IDEA's Electro E-Biz Forum focused on key e-business technologies.

By Allen Ray

The Electro E-Biz Forum 2006 held last month in Long Beach, Calif., captured the imagination of the electrical wholesaling industry's biggest e-biz supporters with a program that explored the latest e-business technologies.

Many seminar speakers throughout the conference picked up on the theme of the opening keynote, "Aligning with a Continuum of Change." Ed Barlow, president, Creating the Future Inc., St. Joseph, Mich., set the tone of the conference in his presentation when he asked attendees, "From emerging technologies to changes in customer interests, tremendous opportunities and threats often begin as weak signals from the periphery. How good is your organization at sensing, interpreting and acting on these signals?"

The conference's format was intended to surround attendees, which included senior executives and business managers, product managers, sales and marketing personnel and e-commerce managers, with e-business experts and the industry's leading e-commerce technology companies.

Attendees were most concerned with learning how to help their companies respond and survive in today's and tomorrow's marketplace. Their key e-business concerns were net-into-stock pricing, the need for more rich data from manufacturers and purchasing over the Web. Several educational sessions that addressed these issues explored methods of boosting sales over the Internet from the viewpoint of an electrical contractor; implementing RFID technology; and understanding blogs and other new media offerings such as podcasts.

"Ed Barlow's presentation really nailed the essence of the message the forum was driving: projecting the collaborative action that must be taken to align business strategies in a global marketplace that is in a constant state of change," said Mike Rioux, president of the Industry Data Exchange Association (IDEA), Arlington, Va.

In addition to Barlow's keynote and the workshops, the Electro E-Biz Forum 2006 offered two other featured presentations: "Master Data Management (MDM): A critical component to your company's business success," by Will Templeton, NetWeaver MDM Solution Engineer, SAP America; and "Survival of the Fittest: How to escape business extinction as IT and business continue to merge," by Evan Gaddis, president, National

Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA).

All of the Electro E-Biz Forum's educational sessions were designed to provide insight into the top business and technology solutions that can help electrical manufacturers, electrical distributors and independent manufacturers' reps increase productivity and drive down supply-chain costs. One attendee was happy with the overall focus of the event and the variety of in-depth seminars on specific aspects of e-business.

"The event had good variety, which enhanced the experience," said Robert Sieger, manager global e-business development, Panduit Corp., Tinley Park, Ill. "It proved to be an excellent source for information."

Another interesting feature of the conference was the

Electro E-Biz Forum's second annual Tech Center. Sixteen technology organizations exhibited their products and services: Activant Solutions, Boomi Software, eCredit, eMobileCat, epaCUBE, DATAgility, Datalliance, DISA, Full Tilt Solutions, Enterworks Inc., IDEA, Infor Global Solutions, Intuit Eclipse, SAP America, TMMG and Trade Service Corp.

The Tech Center Passport, an incentive-based supplement, made its debut at the Electro E-Biz Forum. Attendees received stamps for each vendor they visited. After visiting all vendors, attendees were eligible for a drawing for one of three Apple iPods.

Two electrical manufacturers and one electrical distributor were winners: Neil Banoff, Advance Transformer, Rosemont, Ill.; Steve Segerstrom, Intermatic Inc., Spring Grove, Ill.; and Sharon Todd, Western Extralite, Kansas City, Mo.

The Electro E-Biz Forum 2006 was jointly hosted by IDEA; the National Association of Electrical Distributors (NAED); the Electro-Federation Canada (EFC); NEMA; and the National Electrical Manufacturers Representatives Association (NEMRA). The Electro E-Biz Forum 2007 will be held on Sept. 18 to Sept. 20 at the Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre Hotel in Vancouver, British Columbia. □

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