

The following Logan Enright authored article appeared on SVOnline.com in the September 2005 issue.



“Independent representative” is a term that is ever present in the industry today. But, what does it actually mean?

From whom or what does this independence come? What is it that is represented? Now, the mystery will be explained.

An independent representative is a single person or organization exclusively contracted to sell and market the product line of a manufacturer (or multiple manufacturers) within a defined geographical territory. These reps are professionals, often with years of experience and expertise, skilled at selling and marketing products through dealers and distributors.

The Independent Representatives Council of ICIA is a growing group of AV sales and marketing experts. Our goal is fourfold:

1. Raise understanding and awareness of the rep model to this industry
2. Bring professionalism to our channel
3. Foster professional development in the rep industry
4. Keep recruiting members.

To accomplish this goal, the council’s mission is to provide a platform where independent reps can identify, discuss, and act on mutual opportunities, needs, and concerns in an open forum.

Since the role of today's rep includes relationship building, marketing, problem solving, intelligence gathering, database management, and a plethora of other functions, we feel that the council platform allows us to stay ahead of the curve by sharing ideas and knowledge.

ICIA's atmosphere of shared knowledge, promoted through activities like its upcoming Leadership Forum in September, not only applies to those within the Independent Representatives Council, but to all of the association's councils and committees.

We spend a great deal of time conversing with other councils to get a feel for the direction of the industry and to see where we can help each other.

A good example of this process is our collaboration with the Manufacturers Council. Given the nature of our jobs, a strong working relationship with manufacturers is key. Both of the councils decided to try to find ways to enhance these relationships in a way that will benefit everyone. Some of the resources that have come out of this collaboration are ideas about a best practices document and the development of a standard pricing template. Both projects allow for easier and more standardized communications among manufacturers, reps, and dealers. Most importantly, they will help streamline a process to eliminate the potential for misunderstandings and incorrect information.

In addition to meeting with other councils, the Independent Reps Council has the opportunity to collaborate with ICIA departments to help benefit its members. For example, a questionnaire is currently in development with assistance from the ICIA Market Intelligence Department, which will go out to member companies querying current rep issues. The results of this questionnaire will hopefully give us some understanding of the concerns and direction of ICIA Independent Rep companies and help us to address these issues.

In addition to networking opportunities, the council also affords companies the opportunity to help shape the way that ICIA represents each market segment, as well as the industry in general. Every council has a chair who sits on the ICIA Board of Governors, and these chairs have the ability to influence the direction of ICIA and

InfoComm initiatives, from classes presented at InfoComm to ICIA member benefits. This opportunity to help shape our industry is a tremendous perk to ICIA members.

As independent reps, we are excited to be a part of ICIA and everything it does for our industry. As a council, we would like to encourage any reps to join and help shape our profession. Find out more through ICIA's website at www.infocomm.org or contact ICIA's membership department at membership@infocomm.org.

Submitted by Logan Enright, The Enright Company, Chair of the ICIA Independent Reps Council.