

www.gsatech.com / Revenues: \$112 million / Headquarters: Oakdale, N.Y. / Employees: 33 / Specialty: Electronic and electrical products
 / John Beaver, CEO: "We can ride out the storms of the economy because we're diversified across various niches."

Bringing it Home

The GSA Organization's proactive approach to representing manufacturers' products had led to regional and market growth. **BY JIM HARRIS**



The company says it succeeds because of the diversity of its markets and the manpower it deploys.

The GSA Organization believes in taking a proactive approach to sales. "My salespeople are only paid commission based on what they bring to the party; we pay based on their own established target accounts, where 20 percent commission is paid for the life of a new project, as long as they brought the new project to the party first," says John Beaver, CEO of the Oakdale, N.Y.-based manufacturer's representative company. "We strongly encourage our salespeople to go out into the field and

specify new projects instead of relying on the factory to bring business to us."

The company's sales staff seeks business directly from end-users of the electro-mechanical, electronic and electrical components. The majority of each rep's sales time is spent at the engineering level working to get GSA's manufacturers' products specified into new and existing design projects. GSA representatives also train the distributors of the products represented by the company to ensure proper mindshare.

"Manufacturer's representatives are responsible for bringing in the business, otherwise there's no commission," Beaver adds, noting sales reps are paid a base salary that covers the work they bring in from manufacturers. "We like to say that the mortgage is paid from the business that comes in from factories, but the vacations are covered by what the sales rep specifies themselves."

The GSA Organization consists of five different business units representing manufacturers on the east coast,

THE GSA ORGANIZATION

from Maine to Virginia. These business units – GSA Optimum, GSA New England, GSA Parallax, GSA Sales and GSA Blair – each serve a different region. “Each GSA business unit provides professional and technical sales representation for world-class electronic and electrical product manufacturers,” the company says. “We are committed to the complete satisfaction of our principals, customers and distributors, and the success of the overall organization. Our goal is to assist customers with product design-in and procurement and to provide accurate, complete and prompt communication of the relevant issues between our principals, customers and distributors.”

The company sells products into the utility, aerospace, factory automation, military, solar, food processing and machine-building markets. “We can ride out the storms of the economy because we’re diversified across various niches,” Beaver says. “The key to our success is the diversity of the markets we’re in and the manpower we have to cover those markets.”

KEYS TO SUCCESS

Beaver believes that his organization is successful because each business unit consists of proven sales professionals and highly technical engineers working together to identify opportunities, build relationships, design in products and capture business. From seasoned manufacturer’s reps that understand the reps’ responsibilities to seasoned ex-factory direct team members who understand the principal’s needs, each sales team has a wide spectrum of products and market knowledge that they need to grow business organically.

DECADES OF GROWTH

Beaver takes an active role in developing his company’s sales staff, as he spends much of his time on the road visiting the GSA Organization’s sales offices. “My goal is to train our reps

and make sure we keep the same sales philosophy consistent through our territory, and that’s only really possible through constant travel,” he adds. “I consider myself the quality control person for the entire firm.”

The company and its CEO are both active in community and industry organizations across GSA Organization’s territory. Beaver serves on the board of the Manufacturers’ Agents National Association (MANA), and also is an active member of the Electronic Representatives Association (ERA) and National Electrical Manufacturers Representatives Association (NEMRA). Beaver in June chaired an ERA golf outing benefiting several veterans’ organizations. The GSA Organization is also active with the Muscular Dystrophy Association and other charity groups.

Beaver founded the company in 1984, initially carrying just two lines: a photoelectric product line and a rectifier line. Since its formation, the company has grown steadily over the years, in part by acquiring other companies. “Acquisition is a big part of our growth strategy,” he says, noting his first acquisition was in the early 1990s. “We’re always looking to bring on more territories.”

The company’s most recent acquisition was of Parallax, which represents electro-mechanical and electronics products to clients in the New York and New Jersey metro area. The company sells into markets including the telecommunication, power supply and toy manufacturing industries. The region is also served by GSA Optimum, which represents electric products.

The GSA Organization has also grown organically, most recently through its entry into the upstate New York market. “We did that at the insistence of our principals, and are now in that region with four lines,” Beaver says. “I’m proud of the fact that we have spread through the Northeast because of the encouragement of my principals.” □



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