

## McCauley Expands SDG Program

PUYALLUP, WA—McCauley Sound has expanded its System Design Group (SDG) services. Responding to the success measured in the first year of the program, the company intends to double the resources and personnel allocated to this group for 2004.

The SDG is a free factory design and support service which leverages McCauley Sound's in-house engineering expertise for the benefit of McCauley's contractor and consultant partners. The goal of the SDG is to provide a factory-approved loudspeaker system design to the company's contractor partners for any installation that they believe could benefit from a McCauley loudspeaker solution. By making McCauley Sound's extensive engineering resources and expertise available to the contractor during the design phase of an installation, a contractor has the advantage of bringing a developed and sophisticated loudspeaker design to the bargaining table when proposing a solution to their customers and clients.

Since forming in 2003, the SDG has created high-output foreground loudspeaker designs for more than 100 installations. According to the company, nearly 74 percent of installations designed and proposed through

the SDG program have been accepted by the venue, and installed through the partner contractor.

The SDG's design process is highly streamlined and requires little effort from the contractor. Working off simple paper drawings, CAD files or architectural blueprints, the SDG's CAD team models a realistic 3D representation of the proposed installation. Once completely realized in the model, the SDG imports this venue geometry into an EASE 4.1's acoustic simulation, and based on the predictions EASE software provides, develops and refines a complete loudspeaker solution for the proposed installation. After the SDG meets and agrees that the proposed loudspeaker system has been optimized to meet all the design, performance and budget goals for the installation, the SDG assembles all the project information into a final presentation package, complete with full-color images detailing the performance, power and coverage of the proposed solution. Finalized and delivered to the partner contractor, these materials become a valuable tool in the sale presentation to the client.

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## soundretail

### Relationships in 2004 Hard To Make, Harder to Maintain

**"Can we grow old together in harmony and health, or are we looking at a rocky road ahead?"**

No, we are not talking about your significant other (although it might feel that way at times), we are talking about your local sales representatives and the vendor's they may represent. How do these relationships affect the end-user and how will they affect your bottom line?

These are the relationship questions everyone needs answered, to know how they stand in the ever-evolving world of business today. Which companies support you, the dealer, allowing you more time with your business, with your clients, and your eventual bottom line? And how do you, the retailer, respond to your clients in this technologically challenging world?

Depending on your local rep for training, product support and general information is a given, right? Not so fast! We all know about pro audio and MI vendors who have tested the waters, eliminating reps in select territories and reverting to "dedicated factory" people. Such rep firms, that once relied on the income of two or three key "anchor lines," then question the need for the "third or fourth" associate, or whether they need an administrative assistant anymore, while, in an effort to maintain a positive cash flow. Retailers are adding "floor duties" to the responsibilities of employees that once had none. Does this help your business in the end? If all the links in the chain are solid and things flow smoothly, then logically, eliminating a "link" will weaken the chain. So the answer must be no. But if the chain is weak, it must be repaired and then such an approach can possibly help the bottom line. Only time will tell if a change is good. At Sam Ash Professional, we have undertaken dedicated clinics and seminars to train sales people and to educate clients—something retailers and reps might want to explore.

Changing the existing rep/retailer/manufacture relationship is not something that should be done lightly. Many of the larger retail firms have studied (and abandoned) scenarios that bypass the reps. While you might be thinking that you would be better off without the rep pestering you every week, there are benefits they bring to the table that might be sorely missed. Will the factory respond immediately to your queries, or will you wind up in phone purgatory, trying to get that "special dedicated dealer representative"? How fast does the rep expedite that "rush" order, and can they make faster contact with the "dedicated factory person"? If you need a sample hand-delivered for an important client, does

your rep service your needs, or are you better off in the hands of the factory?

The answers to these questions and the end result are quite evident. Don't think for one minute that a field facilitator has the same vested interest as a commission paid rep. Not for one single second. That is not to say the field associate can't be great (of course, some are), but a rep has a business whose survival is predetermined by the sales he or she makes and the support they give, plain and simple.

You might think you are a 21st Century retailer and consider yourself progressive, while your supplier might actually look at you as just another "box house." Now you might think, "But gee, We8u Electronics promised that through cost savings, I will have lower prices, be eligible for a rebate, and even have a direct factory person to interact with." In reality, your "factory person" is now handling what was two territories (or more), your goals to make a rebate might or might not be met, and the small price decrease you may or may not see, is more than offset by the extra training you may have to provide to your staff.

This is further evidence that as a retailer you must be ever vigilant in servicing your clients, and educating your staffs in order for a harmonious and healthy relationship in 2004. The same holds true for reps and their respective firms. Instead of telling "war stories" of the good old days, be proactive with your clients, forget the blanket faxes and the mass e-mail list you will send out this month. Pick up the phone, get in your car, and ask what can I do to help you? Yes, this manufacturer/rep/dealer/end-user thing is a vicious cycle, but one in which we all must learn to work, and for the dedicated few, thrive.

With margins eroding at the manufacturing level, with increasing pressure from retailers to lower prices, and with the insatiable appetite of a public that has grown accustomed to the next generation of "stronger, more powerful" products at lower retail prices, don't expect this cycle to be broken soon.

In 80 years of success at Sam Ash Professional, relationships and business structures have continued to change and evolve, but the positive results from adapting to such changes speak volumes. While relationships are built and developed by good planning, health is gained by hard work, with past performance a precursor of the future. We can be harmonious and healthy in 2005 if our relationships are built on mutual respect, with a reasoned willingness to progress and develop.

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