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**ALTEL SYSTEMS INC.
BROKERING SOUND INVESTMENTS**

THE MAGAZINE FOR CONSTRUCTION EXECUTIVES

Brokering Sound Investments

Produced by Zach Smith & Written by Tony Ware

Countless audio-visual companies have resumes padded with corporate boardroom installations. But only ALTEL Systems Inc., headquartered out of Brewster, NY, can claim to have run sound for the Chairman of the Board, a.k.a. Ol' Blue Eyes, himself.

"ALTEL has a very deep history of touring sound, which included 20-plus years as Frank Sinatra's sound and technical production company, managing virtually all aspects of sound, lighting, staging, and video at shows throughout the world," recounts Andrew Musci, company president. "We also had extensive experience working with Paul Anka, Liza Minnelli, Steve & Eydie, and most recently during the past 15

years we've supplied rental equipment and services to Tony Bennett."

Of course, being a highly respected name in concert sound is only one facet of what makes ALTEL a fascinating and well-rounded company. ALTEL was founded in 1954, when Al Miraglia, an engineer at Dictaphone, decided to start his own business. "His thought was that since he would be installing internal telephone systems he would call his company ALTEL, short for 'Al's Telephone'," discloses Musci.

In 1972 Musci's father Larry partnered with Henry Cattaneo, a longtime friend, and purchased the business from Al. Larry's background was in



accounting and sales with NCR, while Hank had spent many years working in the recording industry at A&R Studios. The pair soon started expanding the business into intercoms, public address and sound reinforcement systems [ALTEL even installed the soundsystems into Sinatra's home in Palm Springs, but hasn't made residential installations a regular occurrence]. The younger Musci began working at ALTEL part time right after high school, continued on weekends and afternoons while pursuing a bachelor's degree, then started working full-time in 1979 – first making deliveries, then working on installations, moving into sales and then moving up the administrative ranks.

In 1984 Musci left ALTEL to get “involved in the industry from a different perspective,” he says. Musci worked in sales capacities at various amplifier and loudspeaker manufacturers before realigning with ALTEL in 1989. Since that point Musci – along with business partner Stefan Cattaneo, Henry's son – has helped ALTEL maintain consistent, controlled growth, and the company currently has 27 employees – with 20 in Brewster, NY, and seven in a smaller office in Tampa, Fla. Together these offices generate around \$10 million in annual revenue.

Musci has promoted both ALTEL as a leader in systems design and integration, and also dedicated countless volunteer hours to help further important industry agendas and initiatives as a long-time member of leadership councils within both InfoComm and the National Systems Contractors Association (NSCA). Musci is currently serving a term as the President of the NSCA.



One of the indispensable aspects of ALTEL's relationships with its trade association partners has been gaining access to important employee education opportunities. A well-educated workforce has been a key ingredient to ALTEL's overall long-term success. ALTEL's employees understand their jobs well and have the proper skills to achieve success in their roles.

The Bigger Picture

Nearly 15 years ago ALTEL began doing more and more business in the audio-video spectrum, which has included designing and installing audio-visual systems in corporate boardrooms, network operation centers, providing audio teleconferencing and videoconferencing systems, and most recently designing and installing digital signage solutions for a variety of clients, including retail facilities and casino operations across the country. As the sound reinforcement business has been dramatically changed by the advent of DSP (Digital Signal Processing), so has the audio-visual business changed as it has moved more and more into the domain of IT (Information Technologies).

“The blending of AV and IT has required integrators to put employees through a wider range of training in order to be successful partners with network administrators,” states Musci. “We understand now that in the IT world audio-visual gear merely represents additional bandwidth and nodes on the network, and as such we are oftentimes coming under the purview of the client’s IT group as we define the systems’ uses and capabilities. We now need to work closely with a new client in many respects as we move into these new project opportunities.”

Working in IT is part of ALTEL’s organic expansion. Handling all aspects of labor excepting electrical contracting and rigging, ALTEL has overseen countless high-profile installations, such as substantial audio and audio-visual systems in New York’s Jacob Javits Convention Center and Lincoln Center, including the Juilliard School, plus many familiar airports, including JFK, LaGuardia, Savannah, Ft. Myers, Sarasota

and Tampa. Not to mention numerous casino properties including Foxwoods, Mohegan Sun and the Rivers Casino in Pittsburgh, Penn. Working outside of the United States, ALTEL has installed many sound and audio-visual systems in the Atlantis properties in the Bahamas and Mexico, and in Dubai at the Mall of the Emirates. Further custom-designed jobs include a wide variety of systems installed in college auditoriums, sports facilities, theaters, houses-of-worship, cruise ships and museums.

Working in both the design-build and bid markets, ALTEL follows an agile boutique model where the company selects projects that allow the showcasing of creative solutions and innovative technologies, while retaining suitable profitability to insure future viability of the business. “I’ve always said that the one thing we do wrong is building our systems so well,” laughs Musci. “We have systems in the audio side of the equation that have experienced a life cycle of 25 to 30 years requiring only

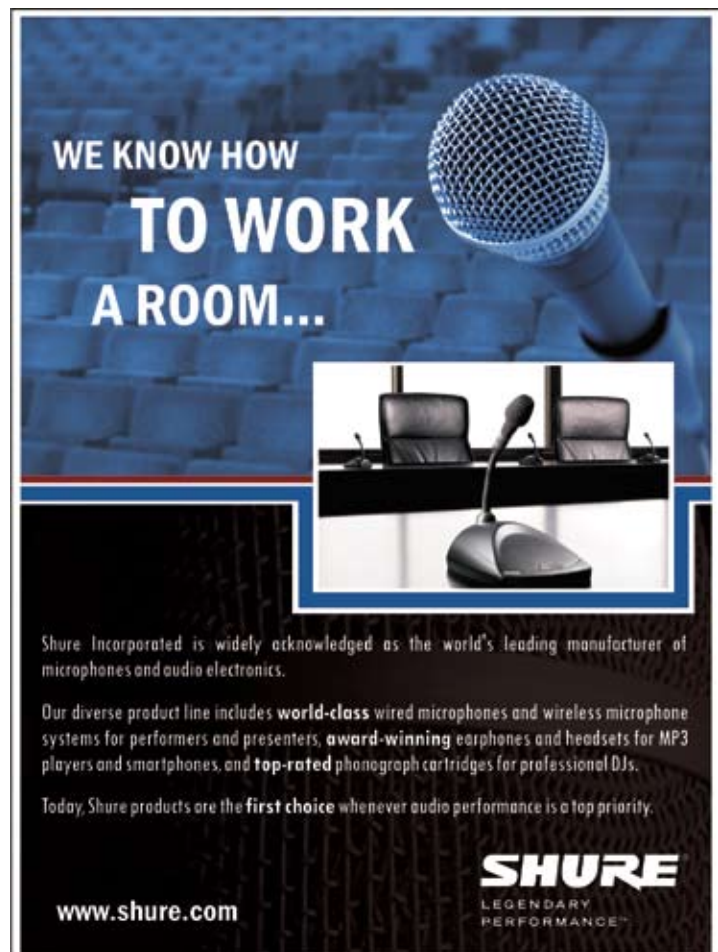


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periodic testing and calibration to make sure everything is performing to its intended specifications. Equipment and systems on the video side tend to be considerably different, usually experiencing more dramatic changes in equipment and shorter upgrade cycles for installed projects.

“We’re definitely looking at the Matrix scenario, as things are evolving rapidly,” continues Musci. “There’s a lot of change, and we as a company must be ready to embrace it and implement it. Oftentimes the newer technologies are much more than the average end-user can handle; there’s really nothing “plug-and-play” about these systems, and that is undoubtedly one of the reasons that an expert firm like ALTEL continues to prosper. When a system is finished we spend a lot of time handing it over to the end-user, making sure that the proper training is done and that the client is satisfied with the results and understands how to fully access all of their new technology. We take a lot of pride in that aspect of the process, and it is a big factor as to why we’ve been successful and hope to be for many years to come.”

When asked, “What single thing do you consider most important to ALTEL’s success,” Musci states, “Relationships! No doubt about it. We have several layers of very important relationships, starting with key clients such as Pfizer, USMA, Pepsi-cola, the Jacob Javits Convention Center, and many others; business partnerships with firms like Sportview Technologies, Specialized Productions, Inc. and the Barnycz Group; strong ties to industry designers, consultants and architects; and let’s not forget our major vendors, such as Shure, Tannoy (The TC Group), and Mitek/IED/Atlas, without whose equipment and support we would not be able to build our systems. We work hard at maintaining these relationships, making certain that their ultimate success lies in a ‘win-win’ attitude for all parties.”

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and tunes diverse technologies into exciting systems that continue to benefit customers with dynamic impact. ■

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