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National Electrical Contractors Association  
THE VOICE OF THE ELECTRICAL CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY



## Technology and Innovation

February 26, 2020

### Introducing NECA's Technology and Innovation Team

*The NECA Innovation Team, we explore the world of technology and keeps members informed of what's happening in our industry today and look to future opportunities to shape the way we build.*



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As this is my first time taking over the duties of writing the NECA technology article from Joey Shorter (who did an amazing job) I feel that it is important to address all the change that is taking place in every market our contractors and chapters cover across this country.

## **Industry Change is Coming Quickly**

Long before taking his seat as the new CEO of NECA, David Long has embraced change. His experience as an IBEW member, then working his way up to the president of Miller Electric, has exposed him to a lot of change within our industry. When David came to meet me in mid-October, he did not use mixed words. He made it clear that he wants to make every single NECA contractor the best they can be, and he knows that embracing technology is going to impact all our contractors regardless of their size. We talked about his plan to transform our association and grow through leadership. For those of you that do not yet know me, you will come to learn that I love making a difference and the opportunity to be the director of industry innovation for NECA is hands down the best opportunity in my 22-year career.

Our innovation team is comprised of Amanda Harbison, the Associate Director, Research, who has been with NECA for over two years. Lonnie Cumpston the Director, Construction Manufacturing who joined us last week and me.

## **Technology and Innovation Team Initiatives**

### **KPI (Key Performance Indicators) Initiative**

We have big plans for our department and how we help NECA contractors of all sizes and our NECA chapters. Amanda is going to lead our KPI (Key Performance Indicators) Initiative, which will help our member companies better measure and benchmark their businesses against other companies.

We know that change is hard and if there is no way to measure your performance, then it is unlikely companies will feel compelled to change their existing practices. Through our KPI initiative, we plan to help NECA contractors learn through data where there are opportunities to improve their business. I like the analogy of using the app Strava for my personal health. If I see a person whom I consider to be my competition logged three miles this morning, then I am more likely to carve out time

in my week to log three or more miles to keep pace with my competitor.

Think of how this could apply to your business. Three percent growth over last year seems strong if that is all you know but, if you knew the average growth for all NECA contractors across the US was five percent and companies similar to you in size and scope in your region was seven percent that would more likely motivate you to take some action. Our KPI initiative is a huge undertaking that is going to require us to work closely with our members, chapters and IBEW locals to gain the most insights that benefits us all. We are working with software partners to test apps that help us digitize workflows to measure different aspects of our businesses.

We also have a plan to work with these software companies that can help benefit our local chapters to increase revenue and provide more local training resources to their members. If you are interested in learning more about the KPI work and how it can impact you and your chapter, grab me at AEI in Chicago next week.

### **DfMA (Design for Manufacturing and Assembly)**

Lonnie Cumpton will be helping our large contractors learn how to evolve into manufacturers and leverage delivery methods like DfMA (Design for Manufacturing and Assembly). Lonnie is going to assist our medium-size contractors leverage offsite construction methods like kitting, prefab, modular and volumetric to help them mitigate risk and increase margins. Then, he is going to work with our small contractors to help them learn what to build and what to buy from large and medium size contractors to help them stay ahead of their competition.

### **Educational and Certification Programs**

Lonnie is also going to play a large role in new educational and certification programs that we will be rolling out, helping our contractors stay ahead of the pace of change. We are looking to add new courses focused on offsite construction, lean, logistics, manufacturing, VDC and more. Finally, Lonnie will be an integral part of the R&D work that we are pursuing through our innovation team. This will be hands-on work directly with contractors measuring outputs to determine best practices. We will work with new technologies and integrate them into workflows to help NECA members adopt new practices more quickly and minimize their own out of pocket expenses.

Lonnie comes to us from Faith Technologies where he held the title of Virtual Construction Technology Manager. Lonnie and I have had a working relationship for many years, and I am so happy to have him on our team. Lonnie's reputation is strong within the AECO (Architectural, Engineering, Construction and Owner)

industry. He has been my personal go-to when it comes to offsite construction, lean, VDC and most anything related to construction technology. To learn more about Lonnie check out his [interview with the ConTech Crew podcast](#).

As for me, I am coming up on four months with NECA next week. I have spent my entire career in the construction industry and worked closely with the Electrical Training Alliance, MCAA, SMACNA, United Association, Smart, AGC, AIA and many other industry associations. I will be working closely with Amanda and Lonnie on their new initiatives and they will be working closely with me to help increase our communications with our members. We are looking to create new online portals where we can share ideas and lessons learned when it comes to prefab, modular skids, standardization, lean, and many more areas of interest. My goal is to instill a culture within NECA that welcomes change and drives innovation through sharing ideas, ultimately rising the tide and lifting all for our contractors' businesses.

You will be seeing and hearing from the innovation team a lot. We want nothing more than to help each of you. We are available to speak at events and come into offices and assess your current workflows to help you improve through safety, efficiency, logistics and value. Also, know that this is a two-way conversation and that we are open to new ideas that will benefit our members. If you have questions or ideas, please reach out to us. We will keep up to speed on our progress and look forward to working with each one of our members and chapters at future events.

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