

**ELECTRI 2024 Winter Council Meeting
Summary of Education Sessions**

Tuesday, January 16:

Tour of Miller Electric Company

The ELECTRI Council meeting began with a tour of the **Miller Electric Company's** Jacksonville headquarters. Attendees visited five stops along the tour: the Client Service Center (CSC) for Service and Maintenance, Smart Building Technology and Monitoring, What We Have Learned from BIM/Prefab/VDC (The Data), a talk on the benefits of partnerships with Miller Electric and the supply chain, and a stop at the Electric Vehicle Innovation Design Center (EVIDC).

Council members expressed their appreciation to Miller Electric for opening the facility for our tour.

Wednesday, January 17

[View the Slides Here](#)

Patty Keenan, Chief Talent Officer, Miller Electric—Overview of Miller Electric

Patty began by describing her admiration for the EC industry. She explained that Miller values trust, collaboration, safety, quality stewardship, and community. They trust employees from day one and that trust does not need to be earned first. The secret of Miller's success is that they make a collaborative effort by bringing people up from the field, as well as hiring from college and outside the company. They also hire right out of high school and teach the industry. This is how they are investing in the future and teaching the younger workforce that work should be a sense of fulfillment – something you get to do, not have to do.

Patty also explained how Miller amplifies talent, with those in the office always there to support those in the field. In addition to the Miller Training Academy, the company has also piloted three successful office apprenticeship programs in the last several years.

Internships are another method Miller uses to find new talent. She suggested making sure to give interns a cohort – another intern or more to work with. If you can, recruit interns from several different schools. Arriving with different experiences enables them to come together and bring some new ideas.

Finally, she suggested the importance of keeping your employees moving on their own career path and providing a clear vision of their path forward. This way, they are more willing to help train new people instead of being fearful that their jobs are being taken.

Dr. Marci Rossell, Former CNBC Chief Economist and Co-Host of *SQUAWK BOX*—2024 Economic Outlook: The Federal Reserve and AI

Dr. Rossell spoke about the current state and the future of our economy. She began by referencing the economy of March 2022 when interest rates started rising. She pointed out that even though the

interest rates have again risen recently, the U.S. economy has thrived. Interest rate increases have worked. Inflation has dropped. She explained that the main story of 2024 will be how declining interest rates will affect the economy over the next 18 months. Unexpectedly, unemployment rates are the same as in March 2022 when many thought the rates would increase. She then mentioned that three sectors of the economy have been hard hit - IPOs, M&A and real estate.

She reviewed some of the fundamental changes that have occurred since the 1980's recession and factors that are now different. For instance, oil prices then played a larger role in the economy. Today the price of gas represents a shrinking portion of the economy. Although people still care about the cost of gas, the net effect of gas prices is pretty much neutral.

One myth that she mentioned was that "the last mile on a recession will be painful." The Federal Reserve should be able to reduce rates in March, April and possibly May of this year. This will affect four main entities of the economy: consumers, businesses, government spending, and foreign spending. The 2024 economic outlook for consumers is strong. The government sector is directly geared to infrastructure, which helps more in the long run than spending directly to individuals. Dr. Rossell believes we should also expect IPOs, M&A and real estate to do better.

The one item she specifically mentioned doing well this year is investments in artificial intelligence. Most technologies lower the cost of physical labor, but AI is different – it lowers the cost of cognition. Human beings are not being replaced by AI. Human beings using AI will replace those who don't use it. This is the year of investments in AI.

Finally, Dr. Rossell said she believes that bitcoin is the next possible bust coming to our economy, similar to the dot.com bust.

Tara Canfield, Schneider Electric—Ted Talk on the Future of Electrical Construction and Trends that Schneider is Watching

Tara began by asking why efficiency gains in construction are stagnant or declining, when gains are increasing in other sectors. She stressed the contractors' need to have the information from items such as a digital twin, data centers and other emerging tools so they can go into client meetings and have all the information on a project. This will allow them to be more efficient in proposing new solutions for the client. She encourages contractors to ensure access to their lessons learned plus keeping notes from their clients that can easily be accessed by the whole team. Information on demand is optimal and is the future of electrical construction.

Thursday, January 18

[View the Slides Here](#)

Josh Bone, ELECTRI International—Potential Impacts of Artificial Intelligence on the Electrical Contracting Industry

Josh's presentation provided a comprehensive analysis on the transformative role of various AI technologies in reshaping the electrical contracting sector. He focused on four key technological domains: robotic process automation (RPA), computer vision, natural language processing (NLP), and machine learning (ML).

1. Robotic Process Automation (RPA): RPA can automate routine, repetitive tasks in the electrical contracting industry. This includes tasks like inventory management, procurement processes, and compliance reporting. By automating these processes, RPA can significantly increase operational efficiency and reduce human errors.

2. Computer Vision: The application of computer vision in the industry was described, with a focus on its potential to enhance safety and precision in electrical installations. Computer vision systems can analyze images and videos from construction sites to identify potential hazards, ensure compliance with safety standards, and assist in complex installations by providing real-time guidance.

3. Natural Language Processing (NLP): Josh examined the impact of NLP on customer service and documentation. NLP technologies can interpret and respond to customer inquiries, manage appointments, and even assist in the creation and organization of technical documentation, thereby improving customer engagement and operational efficiency.

4. Machine Learning (ML): ML's role in predictive maintenance and decision-making was a key point of the presentation. By analyzing data from various sources, ML algorithms can predict equipment failures and optimize maintenance schedules, thus reducing downtime and extending the lifespan of electrical systems.

Electrical Contractor Panel—Riding the Wave: How ECs Can Prepare for Economic Highs and Lows

ELECTRI's Riding the Wave session included panelists Rosana Privitera Biondo (Mark One Electric), Skip Perley (Thompson Solutions Group), and Mark Mazur (MJM Electric).

Key Takeaways

- Invest back in your company and save for when you need to grow into a new market.
- Don't rely on a line of credit. Monitor your cash flow daily.
- Diversify your business so when there is a dip in one sector, you can rely on another to get through a lull.
- Take the opportunity of a lull to reevaluate your processes and procedures to ensure you're most effective.
- Focus on your core customer base and put time into those relationships. They will keep you busy when work slows.
- Put time into your employees and your community to understand their needs and treat them well. With the labor shortage, it's more important than ever to be the preferred employer and provide the flexibility needed to keep your employees happy.
- In order to grow, get out of your own way and mentor the next generation to take the lead.
- Empower your leadership team to learn from others outside your company and implement what they learn.

All the panelists reported a solid work outlook for the next several years. They noted a strong backlog of work, along with several new projects and megaprojects coming to their markets. Each stressed the importance of keeping their loyal customer base happy, while also taking on new work.

When discussing strategies for growth that keep their companies successful, each panelist had an interesting perspective on how to grow cautiously in an uncertain economy. Mark Mazur makes sure to

invest back into the company and not lean on a line of credit. He doesn't pay interest on money when he doesn't have to, giving him another percentage of dollars to put towards growing into a new market. He cautioned that when a company is in business for 20+ years, you have to be ready for the dips in work by living within your means so the ability to grow is always there. He also never lets a crisis go to waste and takes those opportunities to think about MJM's processes and procedures and regroups after a boom to get through a lull. Instead of cutting his team to save money, he looks for ways to repurpose and do things better and more efficiently.

Skip Perley emphasized the importance of controlling debt and spending, and also stressed diversifying your business to ensure a constant stream of work. Thompson Solutions Group offers a variety of products and services to its clients and tries to not rely too heavily on the success of any one sector. If the company finds itself relying on one area, they work to strengthen other markets to have a good balance so that if there are dips in one area, they can rely on another.

Rosana Privitera Biondo explained how her company manages its own money with its own money, not with a line of credit. She puts money away for hard times and monitors her business every day, paying attention to cash flow. She also ensures she has good people in the right places to make the right decisions.

All three panelists agreed that being customer-focused has a lot to do with their success. Skip Perley focuses on managing relationships rather than the project, ensuring that they are the "go-to" for any of their clients' projects. Thompson Solutions Group has had customers for 90 years because of this model, and it allows them to not have to compete as much because of their strong core customer base. Mark Mazur knows it's easier to maintain an existing customer than to find a new one, so he is sure to put in the time to nurture relationships, not take advantage of long-time customers, and not to expect that work will simply be there.

When addressing the labor shortage and finding ways to continue to grow despite a lack of labor, Skip has found success by putting in the time with his employees. They have a food truck that they take to jobsites where the leadership cooks for the crew and takes the time to discuss how to work better together and be more effective. This allows him to hear what his employees are looking for, like more flexibility, and then work to find solutions.

Mark Mazur's goal is to be the preferred employer in his jurisdiction based on how they treat people, including providing training, job fairs, casino nights, and a flexible schedule for single parents when needed. He explained why he doesn't need to rely on incentive pay to keep good workers because he aims to treat them better at his company.

Mark One Electric gets involved in the Kansas City community. Rosana hosts events for the Girls Scouts and other organizations to attract people to the company and to the industry.

When it comes to their plans for growth, Mark Mazur's strategy is simple: Let young people prosper and do not hold my own company back. He plans to continue empowering and mentoring the next generation of employees and trying to get used to not running his company like he always has.

Skip Perley's strategy for growth is to create a great leadership team comprised of problem solvers who have strong relationships with their clients. He's creating a culture that supports sharing the knowledge

learned from other companies and peer groups and taking the time to implement what they learn. Growth in people, in skillsets, and in working together to create a solution is his strategy for growth.

Rosana Privitera Biondo is focusing on culture and finding people who are willing to step out of their comfort zone and step up. She is leveraging her engagement with ELECTRI to be more open-minded and learn from others.

Project Management Apprenticeship

ELECTRI will be sending a recap of the Project Management Apprenticeship sessions in a separate communication. Stay tuned!

ELECTRI Research Projects

The Council voted to fund six research projects. A recap of the projects will be sent to the Council in a separate email.