

# Powerful Business Practices an Interview with Cardone Solomon & Associates about their Approach to Power Solutions



**Christopher Maione**  
ASSOCIATES  
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**FOR ULTIMATE SUCCESS,  
MANUFACTURERS & THEIR REPS  
HAVE TO BUILD PARTNERSHIPS  
THAT ARE ROOTED IN A STRONG  
HISTORY OF MUTUAL RESPECT AND  
A COMMITMENT TO QUALITY  
PRODUCTS.**

*This Q&A paper was developed based on an interview with John Cardone and Michael Solomon and focused on their representation and relationship with SurgeX and LynTec and the synergy between these manufacturers and Cardone Solomon Associates.*

## INTRODUCTION

Inevitably, dealers trust manufacturer solutions, because they trust the rep firm that represents the product and Cardone Solomon doesn't take this lightly. They realize the value of their reputation and they guard it fiercely to maintain the high level of responsiveness, product integrity and customer service that their dealers have come to count on.

## ABOUT CS&A

Cardone Solomon & Associates is a unique manufacturer rep firm located in Northport, New York. This Long Island based firm's territory covers the entire Northeast Corridor of the USA. In business since 1997, Cardone Solomon is considered a specialist in AV Emerging Technologies, Business Development and Sales & Marketing. They represent a number of "best in class", innovative products including power protection, control, sequencing, management and monitoring solutions from SurgeX and LynTec.

Their SurgeX line includes IP-Controllable Surge Eliminators, UPS's, power monitoring and the most advanced enterprise-level platforms for energy management, monitoring, and protection systems.

Their LynTec line includes customized electrical power control for installed audio, video and lighting systems and AC power sequencing and protection from the breaker panel.

## THE Q&A BEGINS

**Q How did Cardone Solomon get started?**

**A** (Solomon) John and I laugh at this but it is true. The vision for our company started in June of 1996 somewhere near Exit 8 of the New Jersey turnpike as we were on our way to InfoComm in Philadelphia that year. By that time, we had been working successfully together, on & off since July 1979, in a few different capacities either as product managers for Shure or in a manufacturer / rep type relationship while I was at Beyer Microphones and John was at New York based rep firm that handled Beyer for the territory. We knew we enjoyed working with each other and we certainly both understood the importance of having a strong business focus, and the key qualities that separates a good vs. great manufacturer's rep. When we talked about it, John & I felt we could rewrite the book on how to be a top notch rep and rep firm, and since we had both been involved in AV for so long, we knew we had a good opportunity to make something great happen between us.

**Q With so many companies and products to represent, how did you streamline your lines to focus your business model?**

**A** (Solomon) Back in 1996, I had walked a project in New York at Morgan Stanley to see a large installation of Beyer microphones. I remember looking around the room at the audio chain of products and realized that there was an incredible market niche in representing merging technologies for multi-purpose, meeting rooms and hospitals. John and I saw that there was a real opportunity for spaces like these and that there was a real need to provide basically everything that a spec writing consultant would want to include as a bill of products for these types of spaces. At the time, there wasn't any one firm in the Washington, DC / Boston corridor that was really focusing on this, so that's where the idea for our firm started to take root.

**Q** **What is the vision for your firm and what do you think are the keys to your success?**

**A** (Solomon) In a band you can have virtuoso musicians, and you respect each other's talent and you realize that together you can play to each other's strengths and create something really, truly wonderful. We understood this from the beginning and our vision was to build the strongest possible team – person to person within the firm. To do this, we stay committed to recruiting and hiring the best people and doing whatever we can to keep these people on board with us for the rest of their careers. We include all of our team members as part of the decision making process about what we sell and represent so that everyone is "All In".

(Cardone) From a product stand point, we get everyone involved in our decision to take on and represent a new line. We bring in our regional managers and we ask them to help us do market research. These managers go out to their end users, dealers, integrators, installers, and VAR's to see how the market is receiving the company we're considering and what their experience with their products has been.

**Q** **Your firm is known for its loyalty and stellar reputation, but with so many products to consider, how do you ultimately choose a product line and a manufacturer you want to partner with?**

**A** (Solomon) Selecting a line to represent is a long educational process for us, but before we even consider a product, we look closely at the ownership and management of the company. We want to get into the head of the people that are running it. We look to see if their fundamental corporate vision is clear and realistic. Do their goals make sense, and does their time frame for measuring success make sense. It's almost as if we are interviewing these companies as much as they are interviewing us.

(Cardone) We look for partners that have similar ideologies and business practice first, and then we look at products that are emerging technologies and that have a good fit in our AV scope.

**Q** **Power products seem to be an important part of your line card, what made you initially consider representing the SurgeX and LynTec lines?**

**A** (Cardone) What jumped off of the page with SurgeX and LynTec for us was both companies' ability to really listen to the market and how much they valued the rep firms that they worked with. SurgeX and LynTec both have a very open management style and they want to "earn" the right to do business with their customers. They don't dictate what reps have to do to keep their lines. They are really smart about the way they leverage their connection with their reps and the end users, dealers, integrators, installers and resellers and they try to incorporate the feedback they get from their reps. We find that SurgeX and LynTec are constantly looking to be innovative and creative to give customers what they need. This is a formula for success and it works for both companies really well.



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**Q Can you share with us some of your thoughts on the corporate leadership for SurgeX and LynTec?**

**A** (Solomon) When we were considering the lines from both SurgeX and LynTec, we went back to basics, and looked at the companies and their management focus before we even thought about looking deeper at their products. Both companies fit our profile for success. They were small to mid-size manufacturers that were engineering and technology driven, customer service and support oriented, and had a tremendous vision for growth.

Whenever we consider a line, we look at it like we are investment bankers and really consider the value that the line brings to our firm. SurgeX and LynTec have so much to offer. Their products were like no others on the market and mission critical facilities were endorsing and utilizing the products. That says a lot about the company and we felt both lines would add a facet to our line card that would round out our offering nicely.

**Q So how do you take a company from relative anonymity to being a mainstream product for your clients?**

(Solomon) When we partner with a company, we only do so if we know they have a good story to tell and we get behind it. We enjoy the challenge of taking a “B” or a “C” product line and making it an “A”. We do this by staying on top of the technology, by keeping the lines of communication between us and the manufacturer open and by actively participating in industry events. Educating the key people about the feature/benefit proposition is also important because they are the ones committed to providing the customer with the highest quality solutions. We know that ultimately this will mean more sales for our manufacturers and additional revenue for our company as well.

**Q How do you classify the product categories for LynTec and SurgeX?**

**A** (Cardone) Both product lines continue to evolve and innovate. SurgeX’ roots in surge protection have now led it to design the Axess, Axess Elite and Cervella products which has made a huge impact for smart energy management, monitoring and control solutions’ The products’ capabilities are revolutionary and can give you a dashboard view of your power consumption, use and performance on an enterprise level.

Meanwhile, LynTec is a line that is in a very unique position in term of product category, unlike SurgeX where there is certain level of box sales, LynTec has to be a very consultative driven but their RPC panels truly have a wide application base. Whether you are specifying the product in AV or in lighting, theater design, PACs, campuses or corporate headquarters, manufacturing facilities or high-rises, controlling power at the breaker level and program sequencing is key to extending the life of your equipment and to balancing power in-rush and general power performance.

**Q What do you find can be the most challenging about representing a new company?**

**A** (Solomon) Pioneering products is a tough and demanding process, but once we are committed we stay the course. Case in point, we signed on with Listen about a year before the product actually started shipping. We saw our work together as a long term investment. Most other rep firms simply look for quick returns. We look for solid companies, innovative & responsive leadership, great products and lasting relationships.

**Q How do you stay abreast of product changes, trends and new technologies?**



**A** (Cardone) We are gear heads at heart and we expect our manufacturers to provide a heavy dose of education and training to help keep us up to date and informed. On our part, we also attend trade events, and monitor forums that are hosted by our manufacturers and attend competitive forums. From a strategic standpoint, it is a wise thing to do.

**Q** **What can you tell us about the leadership at SurgeX and LynTec and how it contributes to their and your ultimate success?**

**A** (Solomon) It's all about personalities, support structure and the ability to listen. Both Shannon Townley at SurgeX and Mark Bishop at LynTec really listen and they stay plugged into what the market is looking for.

Take Shannon Townley for example, here is a dynamic, innovative leader that came from a financial background was dropped into AV and embraced it. He really knows how to listen and is open to innovative ways to move SurgeX forward and his presence has added a dimension to SurgeX that didn't exist before. His willingness to continue to push for product development coupled with his amazing talent for communication, continues to propel SurgeX forward. He is a "get it done" type of leader, and he looks not only at how to react to the market but how to be proactive.



Likewise, Mark Bishop of LynTec also understands the need to reach out and listen to what the market is looking for in power control at the breaker level. They respond accordingly, produce great material and innovative power solutions. Although not traditionally AV based, LynTec has wisely aligned themselves with



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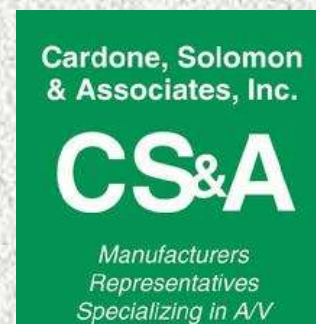


## MORE ABOUT CARDONE SOLOMON ASSOCIATES

With over 51 achievement awards presented to CS&A, the company has grown to seven offices covering the North East and a current staff of eight highly motivated team members. The company has expanded its line card beyond the audio side with state of the art well established manufacturers in all disciplines in the AV chain (Audio, Video, AV Routing and Switching, Video Conferencing, Digital Signage, Fiber Optic Transport Systems, Video and Computer Controlled Technologies).

CS&A continues to seek partnerships with manufacturers that have the vision, leadership, passion, engineering, prowess, and most important, a real pulse of the industry and a true desire to make their customers happy to do business with them.

For more info and a copy of CS&A's line card visit [www.cardonesolomon.com](http://www.cardonesolomon.com).



companies like SurgeX and together they continue to develop a stronger presence and business in the AV channel.

(Cardone) We have a deep respect for these companies at a leadership, management and product ingenuity level. Our ideologies are in sync and we make sure that our rep/manufacturer relationship is as open and honest as it can be. We communicate and we keep on communicating. In reality, dynamic businesses change every day, and we make it a point to innovate and evolve with them and with our market. We are appreciative of the dedication SurgeX and LynTec have to helping us provide the best solutions for our dealers and our clients.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Solid businesses start with great history and a shared vision. Over time they can develop and grow exponentially, but this is only possible when a strong foundation exists. For Cardone Solomon partners, John Cardone and Michael Solomon, their vision has become their reality.

The result? An independent rep firm that is known for their manufacturer loyalty, dedication to building successful business relationships and the ability to provide smart, powerful solutions with companies like SurgeX and LynTec.

**ABOUT CHRISTOPHER MAIONE** - Christopher Maione is a recognized leader and expert in the AV industry with over 28 years of audiovisual expertise. His forward thinking and progressive approach to business led him to found and become the managing partner of one of the world's leading AV consulting firms earning the company accolades as a leader in AV solutions and technologies. In his new company, Christopher Maione Associates, Maione employs the same stringent procedures and protocols that enabled his previous company to achieve global success and a reputation for the highest quality of work. Maione now focuses his attention on AV System Integrators, Manufacturers and Fortune 500 clients to help them identify strategic ways of handling their clients, products, & projects. Maione has a talent for forecasting trends and identifying emerging technologies that substantially impact the AV industry. Based on his own business model, he encourages colleagues to strive for excellence and consistently challenges the AV industry to improve its practices, grow its services, and develop better products in an effort to set a higher standard and respond to the changing needs of clients. Well versed in all aspects of AV, IT, Integrated Technologies, Industry Standards, Green AV and best practices and protocols, Maione is an Adjunct InfoComm Faculty Member and CTS-D/CTS-I provider and serves on a variety of key industry standard committees. In doing so, he continues to set industry benchmarks for quality & compliance. For more info please contact [info@chrismaione.com](mailto:info@chrismaione.com).



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