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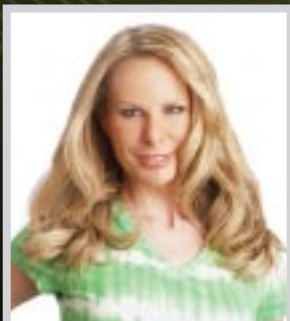
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As Seen In

*CircuitTree*

# Ladies and Gentleman: The Printed Circuit Girl

E-Tec's Marissa Oskarsen Provides a  
Fresh New Look to PCB Sales in America

*Dan Beaulieu*

**T**here's a new face in printed circuit board sales. For those of us old, white guys who have been scared that this industry is going to go to the grave with, well, old white guys, there is hope on the horizon. Marissa Oskarsen is changing the game as we know it. In fact, she is changing the game as we have known it for more than fifty years. She is bringing a fresh, new look to printed circuit board sales and an invigorating new idea to the way independent rep firms are supposed to function.

Who is Marissa Oskarsen and what is she doing? Well, read on.

Operating out of Houston, Texas, Oskarsen is the owner and president of E-Tec sales, one of the fastest growing national networks of printed circuit board sales representatives in the industry. Her goal is to be the "go-to" rep firm for printed circuit boards in the country. And she plans to do it one rep at a time. That plan include a support group for reps. She does not want to compete with them, but rather bring them into her fold, helping them with their sales tactics, their marketing, and the always-very-difficult rep-principal relationship, while at the same time providing the strength that comes from being part of a bigger group. While the rest of the market is groaning under the pressures of the recession and off-shore pricing, and while other independent reps are hurting from the lack of support from their principals and the difficulty of selling in this very tough economy, Oskarsen is unfazed. She has chosen this time to make her move, grow her network, add reps, find and sign with the right principals, and develop a company that is already well on its way to becoming a significant driving force in printed circuit boards sales in this country and, yes, knowing Oskarsen, probably the world.



She says it best: “We want to be the fastest growing and number-one ‘go-to’ rep company for bare board fabrication. We want to be the first and most recognized network of independent reps in our industry. We want to be respected and admired for the support we give other independents by sharing our knowledge and expertise in operating day-to-day logistics, creating brand recognition, negotiating with vendors, and creating a bubble of protection by teaming together. Right now we are a small army, but the world is ours.”

The world? Well, she may be getting carried away with her passion, but it’s good to hear, isn’t it? When is the last time you heard anyone in our industry being passionate about selling PCBs?

Recently, I sat down with Oskarsen. Although serious about her work, she greeted me in solder-mask green converse tennis shoes, gave me a hug, and flashed me a big, girly smile. You can’t help but feel her energy. I wanted to know what makes her tick, what makes her run as fast as she is running right now, and what her plans are.

Here is what she said:

### **So, you are the “printed circuit girl.”**

#### **Where did that title come from?**

At first, it was just a joke between my friendly competitor and I, but in no time my customers embraced it, too. I like it. It not only identifies me but demonstrates the excitement and fun I have at work.

#### **Tell us about what you do. Tell us about E-Tec Sales.**

E-TEC Sales is a network of independently owned and operated sales professionals who share a successful business structure. We specifically seek out independents because the best sales people end up doing one of two things, either getting shares of the company they are working directly for or they start their own businesses. We are looking for those that start their own businesses. Together we can be the most powerful selling team that exists. And by joining forces, we can make up larger capacities in our factories for better leveraging and protection. We share expenses such as shipping, inventorying, marketing, and advertising because alone these costs keep us from being competitive.

#### **How does this work? Frankly, I see a lot of reps who are pretty much lone wolves. What would make them join a network such as E-Tec?**

Good question and one that I always love to answer. True reps are often, as you say, lone wolves. As a matter of fact, they are ‘independent.’ They want to work for themselves, that’s true. But it’s also true that it gets pretty lonely out there, especially in times like we are having right now when it’s good to be part of a larger group. There are many things we do as a group that are difficult to do alone. For example, we exchange information on territories and lead generation, educate each other by rotating in on technology conferences and vendor days, we partner on calls that may be difficult, and share marketing ideas. But most importantly, we have compassion and respect for other inde-



pendent reps and for one another. We know that we can help one another to succeed. Our philosophy is to share. We are greater together than individually. We are ‘strength in numbers.’ We share a business plan, a sourcing pool, and our money. We work together for the good of all. It is a good way for reps to be on their own; to be independent, while still garnering the benefits of being part of a larger and smarter group. It’s a good thing for all involved.

#### **Tell us a little about yourself? Green shoes?! Who are you, what is your background, and what makes you qualified to run this business and do what you are doing?**

My shoes! [laugh] I have been in the printed circuit board business my whole life and it has provided me and my family a good living. So, naturally, green is my favorite color. It’s the color of money, and printed circuit boards! It all started when my Dad, after a year of being in direct sales, bought into Circuitronics, now called Q-FAB, in the Dallas area. My brother, Jeff, bought him out just a few years ago. Altogether my family has been involved in boards for over forty years. My dad was a great influence in my life and he taught me a great deal about running a successful business, especially a printed circuit board business. For the past ten years, I have been involved in sales, which is my passion. For the first seven of those ten years, I worked directly for the family business, but three years ago I decided to set out on my own, to do my own thing, so to speak, and that’s when I started E-Tec Sales. So, I feel that having this background qualifies me pretty well to do what I am doing today. I know how to build boards, I’ve done it. I know every aspect of the printed circuit board business, something that puts me in a very good position to run my company. I can advise my rep-partners on how a PCB shop is operating, what is important to them, what they look for in a rep, and what they consider a great rep-principal relationship.

#### **So, let me get this straight, who exactly are you selling to? Reps or principals?**

I am selling to both. I am always looking for great reps to join my network, while at the same time I am looking for great principals that have a great product to sell. My job is to build the best sales network I possibly can, one that is so efficient, professional, and successful that companies will be clamoring to have them represent them. And then my job, my responsibility is to connect that rep network to the best principals possible. Both sides of this equation have to be outstanding in order for this to work. In short, we want to be the number-one go-to for PCBs. And also want to be the number-one go-to rep network. We want it all!

#### **Where do you get all this energy, particularly with times as hard as they are right now?**

I know times are tough, but what am I supposed to do about that? Sit around and wring my hands? Times are always tough, especially in this industry, right? But, I also believe that in tough times comes opportunity and that is a great time to be out there building some-

## Ladies and Gentleman: The Printed Circuit Girl

thing new and unique. I know that a lot of people are giving up, that they are using these times as an excuse not to do their jobs, so fine, that's their business. I don't feel that way. This is what I see, in this time, in this market, people are looking for alternatives and are willing to 'think different,' and we are tapping into that while our competition continues to do more of the same. E-TEC has an advantage the others don't. This industry is dated, it has lost creativity and enthu-



**But most importantly, we have compassion and respect for other independent reps and for one another. We know that we can help one another to succeed.**



siasm, and in many cases your ordinary printed circuit board salesman has become complacent. He is not using modern technology to connect; he is not educating his customers through webinars, doing permission marketing by social networking, or managing teams and customers in virtual meetings. This may not be so important now, but what I see is companies hiring younger buyers of the gaming generation. They are comfortable with this technology and relying on it for information, communication, and to lower company expenses. Yet, I don't see a lot of our competition evolving. At E-TEC, we are young, aggressive, and we encourage modern thinking and solutions.

**That all sounds good, but the proof is in the pudding, as they say. How are things going right now?**

Well, as I said before, times are tough, but we are growing all the time. The business right now is tougher to get and you have to be very aggressive, but hey, that's the name of the game anyway. We are signing more reps and more principals every month and we continue to book a pretty significant amount of business on a regular basis. To be truthful, finding reps to join our network right now is not that difficult; with hard times come scary times and reps are having some scary times out there right now. Many of them are looking to be part of a stronger network; they are looking to be part of something bigger, an organization that can help them. And as far as principals are concerned, I think that traditionally they had such a hard time with reps in good times and in bad that they are always on the lookout for a strong and aggressive sales team, like ours, that will provide them with new business opportunities. There isn't a circuit board company in America right now who is going to turn away from a chance to increase their sales.

**What are your plans for the next couple of years? They say that we should be out of this recession later this year and then maybe some things can get back to normal, if there is such a thing anymore. What are your plans for the future? How are you going to make sure that you keep growing and that E-Tec becomes everything that you hope it will be going forward?**

First, we will follow General Patton's favorite saying, 'Audacity, audacity, always audacity.' Our competitors have become complacent

and they do not expect or see the real threat, there has never been a better time for action. We will fight them on price, we will fight them on quality, and we will fight them on delivery, and we will never surrender, as learned from Churchill. We will seek out opportunities, we will roll up our sleeves and we will hit the pavement, we are not your ordinary rep that is comfortable, we always want more and are never satisfied because we know we are capable. We will get the attention of reps and sub reps, we will show by example and they will want to join us. We will also expand with the help of our principals. If there is an account that is on the approved vendor list with multiple locations, but business is only coming from one of them, we will visit each site and develop it for the principal. We will do everything in our power to make our rep-partners successful, which in turn will make them sell better and hence our principals successful. Everything that this recession has brought, we take as an opportunity. If our competitors are complacent, we are the opposite, we are hopeful and aggressive. If they are giving up, we are just getting started. If they want to blame everyone from Obama to China, from the IPC to the economy, then let them. That is not my style. That is not E-Tec's style. That is not the way I was brought up. Everything we are doing right now, we would be doing recession or no recession and we feel that by doing these things and by being strong, passionate, and aggressive with a healthy and hopeful vision for the future, we will succeed.

**Kind of a Churchill-channeling thing going on there; are you running for anything? Or are you just really like this all the time?**

I am just really excited about what I do, I love it. I believe in what I am and I'm extremely optimistic about the future. ■

