

ECRS Takes the Silver at RSPA 2005

Retail Convergence Strategy at the Core of ISV's Success

ECRS is proud to be the recipient of RSPA's prestigious 2005 Silver Award for "**Outstanding Sponsor in Software/Systems.**" RSPA presents a Gold, Silver, and Bronze award in this category each year to the top three RSPA member ISVs with exemplary reseller channel programs. ECRS was the only retail-centric ISV recognized in the category this year. This honor reflects highly on ECRS's unwavering commitment to the ongoing success of its partner channel, and to its visibility as the retail solution provider of choice among the nation's top resellers.

We spoke with **ECRS Founder and President Pete Catoe** about the ECRS partner channel, and how his company's strategic approach to partnership has led to this high level of distinction among industry ISVs.

ECRS Newsroom: What was your initial reaction when it was announced that ECRS had won the Silver Award for Outstanding Sponsor in Software/Systems?

Catoe: I've been involved with RSPA (formerly ICRDA) for the last 16 years, and have always watched the award ceremony with great anticipation. I was delighted when our Channel Partner Director, Terry Ward, informed me that we had won Silver.



ECRS Newsroom: Tell us about the history of ECRS's partner channel.

Catoe: In 1989 Curt Kennington and I formed ECRS for the very purpose of providing retail automation software to the ICRDA (now RSPA) community. I've spent my entire professional career working with dealers and building products that meet their specific reseller needs. We started building our post-DOS partner channel back in 1998 with the initial release of CATAPULT. We'd watched other ISVs do cattle calls in attempts to build reseller channels overnight, but we knew that approach was not conducive to our long-term success, or to reseller longevity. So we started the arduous, time-consuming task of finding the best VARs in the industry. For almost seven years now we've been building our reseller community one qualified dealership at a time. Today we have 74 Catapult reseller partners in strategic locations throughout North America, and we're still growing steadily. Practically all of our channel growth is coming from referrals within our partner network, which speaks volumes about ECRS's reputation. We offer resellers a total package that includes the industry's best retail software, world-class support, and the market leadership they seek from an ISV.

ECRS Newsroom: What is it about your partner channel that makes it unique?

Catoe: The term "partner" is key here. We used to refer to our resellers as "dealers," which is still the most common term in the industry. But as our channel evolved, we began to notice that much of the success was due to the nature of our relationship with them. We realized that we were working with them not just as resellers, but as strategic business partners. We've always had open communication with our channel, but with the maturation of ECRS's Retail Framework and our emphasis on Convergence, we have seen a new level of ISV/VAR interdependency emerge. The win-win mentality we share with our "partners" has taken us all to new heights.



"Practically all of our channel growth is coming from referrals within our partner network, which speaks volumes about ECRS's reputation."

- Peter Catoe
ECRS President & Founder

ECRS Newsroom: That must be very important in terms of the longevity of your partner channel.

Catoe: It's absolutely crucial. And what's great about this synergy is that it's not limited to our relationship with our partners, but is widespread among our channel members as well. We've been bringing them together for years now for product training, sales and marketing forums, and of course to just have a good time. So many of them know each other like family. They are constantly swapping product information, exchanging sales strategies, and sharing stories from the field.

ECRS Newsroom: What programs at ECRS have most contributed to the success of your partner channel?

Catoe: We have a number of programs in place, including a lead distribution program, monthly software training schools, and a Ready-Set-Go program. Plus, we make sure they have an arsenal of product collateral, customer testimonials, and other key selling tools at their fingertips. Many of our best testimonials and collateral ideas come straight from our partners. They're in the trenches every day selling ECRS products, so they know what works. We leverage their knowledge and expertise constantly to improve our sales and marketing materials.

ECRS Newsroom: You've mentioned the Ready-Set-Go program and your Convergence strategy. What's that all about?

Catoe: Ready-Set-Go (RSG) is a value-added hardware/software resell program we've created for our partners to help them simplify their integration efforts when implementing our products in the field.

Its purpose is two-fold. First, ECRS chooses the best hardware and bundles it with our software, which we then test rigorously for quality assurance before bringing it to market. This removes the integration burden from our partners' workload, which they greatly appreciate, because they want to be selling, not integrating. Secondly, we create solution-specific RSG documents that clearly communicate the value of our bundled solutions to our partners, and which they pass on to their clients.

Our RSG partner program is a direct result of our overall Retail Convergence Strategy, which I'll sum up briefly as ECRS's strategic initiative to bring together the industry's best software, hardware, and support under one roof to provide comprehensive, out-of-the-box solutions with one point of contact for all aspects of the system. As an ISV, we think being a single-source provider benefits everyone involved. Can you imagine going to purchase a new car and having to buy the body from one vendor, the engine from another vendor, the transmission from another, and so on? We do Convergence because it makes the most sense.

ECRS Newsroom: And your partners understand how to fully leverage this Convergence?

Catoe: Absolutely. There is sometimes a brief learning curve for newcomers to our partner community, but once they've been through our required training courses, and have been introduced to the RSG program, they really "get" Convergence, which is all about value and how to sell it effectively. Our partners know from the outset that they have the most competitive offering when they come to the table with an ECRS solution, because they know they have the strongest software/hardware combination, and they know how to sell that combination as one dynamic solution. Our recent No. 2 ranking for ROI, No. 3 ranking in



ECRS Partner Channel Director, Terry Ward, accepts the RSPA Silver Award on behalf of all ECRS employees.

“Can you imagine going to purchase a new car and having to buy the body from one vendor, the engine from another vendor, the transmission from another, and so on? We do Convergence because it makes the most sense.”

- Peter Catoe
ECRS President & Founder

Ease of Integration, and No. 6 ranking in **TCO** in the [2004 RIS News Leaderboard](#) are clear indicators to our partners that ECRS products are truly value-based solutions that end up costing end-users less than competing systems. Unlike other resellers out there, our partners know how to sell the powerful nuances of our retail automation systems far beyond the scope of the standard feature set. They know how to extract the long-term ROI value of ECRS solutions, which has been crucial to our mutual success.

ECRS Newsroom: Given the current success of ECRS's partner channel, how do you envision moving forward to continue this success?

Catoe: We continue to seek out partners who are team players that want to be part of a successful, exclusive network that embraces the ECRS Retail Convergence Strategy. Continued protected territories, strategic partner forums, new target markets, and new product additions to our retail framework are all on the horizon for the ECRS partner community as we move together into the future with the number one retail automation solution in the industry.

About the ECRS Partner Network

ECRS's global partner network is made up of the most qualified and capable retail automation specialists in the industry. These highly-trained, detail-oriented individuals are hand-picked by ECRS to be a part of an exclusive retail automation community because of their proven dedication to excellence in the trade. ECRS works closely with its partners to ensure customers receive the most professional, knowledgeable service available in the industry.



About RSPA

Retail Solutions Providers Association is the trade association dedicated to resellers of POS and cash register systems. RSPA offers educational and business services programs to assist our membership in establishing and excelling in standards of business and customer service.

ECRS products can be found in more than 12,000 store locations throughout North America. More information about ECRS is available on the web at www.ecrsoft.com.