

# POV: Surveying Independent Reps

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The Independent Reps Council of InfoComm International has completed the first *2006 Independent Representatives Council Survey*. InfoComm's many member councils represent independent reps as well as manufacturers, consultants, programmers, technology managers, and dealers/integrators.



The charter of the Independent Reps Council promotes the use of representatives in the commercial AV industry by offering professional services to our council, heightening the skills and overall performance of our members. Council members are drawn from major rep firms in the AV industry.

We developed the survey in 2005 after recognizing that manufacturers' representatives as a group are in a critical transition period. With the impact of the Internet, the blurred lines between commercial and residential AV, and the varied roles of reps and distributors, we concluded that comprehensive survey results were essential to track trends and secure our future well-being.

The survey questionnaire was developed over the course of several months during various conferences, meetings, and at the InfoComm International Fall Leadership Conference in Virginia. Survey questions were framed by a subcommittee consisting of myself; Darcy Harrell (Total Marketing); Frank Michael Culotta (Symco); Penny Russell (Marketec); Nelson Brugh, CTS (Anew CT); Dale Stoltz (Rep-Presents); Phil Kipnis (Pacific Coast Visions); and Ken Colson (Emergent Media Marketing). We wanted results that would provide a detailed outline of how independent reps conduct their business in the industry.

The survey was conducted online in October 2005, with the council inviting independent rep companies from across North America to respond. An impressive 34 percent responded, offering a good snapshot of the makeup, operation, and business structure of our industry's AV rep firms. The survey offered a breakdown of the types of independent rep businesses, looking at average total sales, facets of the industry on which we focus, and the changing product lines over the past year.

The 48-question survey explores employee compensation, sales responsibilities, subcontractors and commission rates, manufacturer relations, expenses, payroll services, incentives, and reporting.

The *Independent Reps Council Survey* addresses questions about software, distribution of information to resellers, non-compete clauses, manufacturers' provision for paying commission in different billing situations, commission reports, division of sales territory, creation and operation by budget, and leads for channel partners.

Survey recipients identified the goal that had the largest effect on business operations and one tool or strategy designed to meet that goal. You will find the results to be fascinating and surprising.

This past January, the Independent Reps Council released the results of the *2006 Independent Reps Council Survey* to its members and discussed its findings in a conference call. The results were distilled by InfoComm into a readable and understandable format. The initial reaction to the survey has been quite positive. Overall, the group found the survey results to be important in the operation of their businesses.

Our ambition is for rep agencies to use the survey as a guide or roadmap for managing their total business operations. We believe this report will be a helpful resource for our channel. This survey will be completed annually, making it a living document. Therefore, in a few short years, we will have a powerful multi-year report allowing us to compare one year's answers to another.

Visit [infocomm.org/marketresearch](http://infocomm.org/marketresearch) to get your copy of the *2006 Independent Reps Council Survey*. For more information about the survey, email [marketresearch@infocomm.org](mailto:marketresearch@infocomm.org).

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