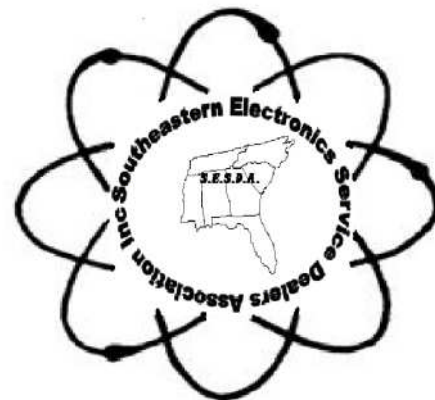


The
SESDA
COMPONENT



Induced Knowledge



SERVING THE SOUTH EAST SINCE MAY 2008

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION BY AND FOR THE MEMBERS OF

THE SOUTHEASTERN ELECTRONICS SERVICE DEALERS ASSOCIATION

A NESDA AFFILIATE

MARCH 2011

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

S.E.E.C. 2011

South East Electronics Conference

Wednesday, April 6 through Saturday, April 9, 2011

Lake Lanier Islands Resort

Lake Lanier Islands, GA

Registration \$150 Per Person

Membership in SESDA - Live Training by Manufacturers - Certification Training & Testing

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VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

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From the Editor

Trunk slammer is a term that has negative connotations, someone just above a monkey with a wrench. The term refers to someone who has shed the brick and mortar building and is running a repair operation with little or no overhead. When they pull out of the driveway the entire operation goes with them. Do they have a business license? Do they carry liability insurance? Do they pay taxes? Are they even qualified to hold a screw driver?

Many of these self employed servicers are hard working and well trained. Third party providers and even some manufacturers have made it increasingly clear with their rate structure that they prefer technicians without any overhead. At the same time saying they prefer the well established service centers because they provide a higher level of service yet they are unwilling or unable in these economic times to pay for that level of service.

The more traditional service centers are now hiring remote technicians in an effort to broaden their geographic coverage area and supporting them by using self storage locations as an address for parts deliveries. The difference is this type of company provides vehicle, insurance, computer, training, call dispatching, parts acquisition and some level of background screening. All this is supplied at a cost. A service center has little choice in the matter at present as hungry fish are ready to gobble up what the big fish leaves behind. Traditional service centers are increasingly becoming the servicer of last resort yet can hardly survive on the leftovers from these warranty companies using them in a last ditch effort to avoid replacing the set. Then turn around and complain about the higher than average buyout rate from that very servicer in some misguided effort to spur them on to fix a set with a bad panel short of replacing the panel.

There is increasing amount of bad blood between the two sides. The self employed say they offered the money and I needed the work while service centers see a declining number of dollars available to pay the overhead. At some point the warranty companies and manufacturers that use these independents may find that their old reliable well established service center isn't out there or can't afford the job and they will be left with replacing the ones that a board won't fix. That will only erode their bottom line but by then it may be too late.

Dan Mundy, CET/CSM/MST
Editor

Trunk Slammer is a derogatory term for a contractor who has minimal skill, experience and equipment. Trunk slammer implies the [contractor](#) works out of their car [trunk](#), with no office or licenses and they will likely be difficult to find if the client is not happy with the work.

I used to think I was one of these however that was due to my inadequate knowledge of what the term means to our industry.”(Urban dictionary)

Now I know it means not just someone working out of their trunk as I had started my business but someone who gets in to business without the proper licenses and knowledge to complete the job effectively.

I'm presently reading the autobiography of Ben Franklin and it strikes me in the early 1700's you went to school till the age of 12 or so and then you went into a trade to become an apprentice you literally had to sign an indentured servitude agreement until you were 21 which meant you could be beaten and treated in any way your master thought necessary for you to learn the trade most of the time you lived in rat infested squalor provided by the master. That was the only way to get into any trade.

Now it seems all you need is a screw driver and a car and you to can make your dreams come true

After a recent bad storm season here a couple of years ago roofers and “painless body repair” shops seemed to spring up in every grocery store parking lot and neighborhood.

We aren't the only industry dealing with “trunk slammers” they have been around for a long time.

Our Industry is judged on the actions of all of us in the industry and we can never do anything about the Trunk slammer problem until the general public learns who the good guys are and who the bad guys are.

What each of us can do about this problem is to report any Trunk slammer to the authorities and make sure the authorities go after them if they are operating without a license and as far as my state and county goes that is a crime.

One other thing we can do is to inform the public by letting them know the quality shops that are members of NESDA and SESDA we need to get these organizations names out into the public so when they need a TV or other electronic device repaired they automatically think of a NESDA or SESDA shop first.

I hope to see all of you at the SESDA SEEC show in early April!

www.sesda.org

Peter Rattigan

2010 ISCET Technitian of the Year

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There has been an effort by the manufacturers and TPA's to reduce their cost of providing service in any way they can.

One way to accomplish this is to offer such dismal rates to servicers that very few legitimate businesses can afford to run the calls.

So to fill the void they are now hiring inexperienced people with little training to run their calls.

Everybody knows that all it takes to repair a TV nowadays is someone who can take out a few screws and unplug some connectors.

These people will work cheap, dirt cheap, because they have very little overhead other than the vehicle they drive.

Many are not properly licensed or insured, they have no storefront to maintain, and I'd love to see one of them produce a copy of their income tax return.

As a matter of political correctness these people are now referred to as "Trunk Slammers".

Personally I thought the former name for them, "Trunk Monkeys", was a more appropriate description.

I've received numerous complaints from people who've had the trunk slammers arrive at their home, supposedly diagnose the set, collect for their initial service call and then never return to complete the job!

So if my little shop has heard numerous complaints from different people I can only imagine how widespread this problem has become.

Many service centers are now complaining that these trunk slammers are "stealing" their work.

But this is not the case.

They are simply doing a job that is offered to them.....even monkeys have to eat.

The blame has been misplaced.

The problem lies with the manufacturers and TPA's who are willing to hire them.

Until policy changes are made at a higher level and the parties involved realize the value of quality, professional service, the trunk slammers are here to stay.

We can no more eliminate the trunk slammer than we can the DYI'er or internet repair Guru.

So if anyone is casting stones at the trunk slammers they should re-direct their aim, pick up a big brick, and smash it into the face of the CEO's at the companies who are hiring the slammers to begin with.

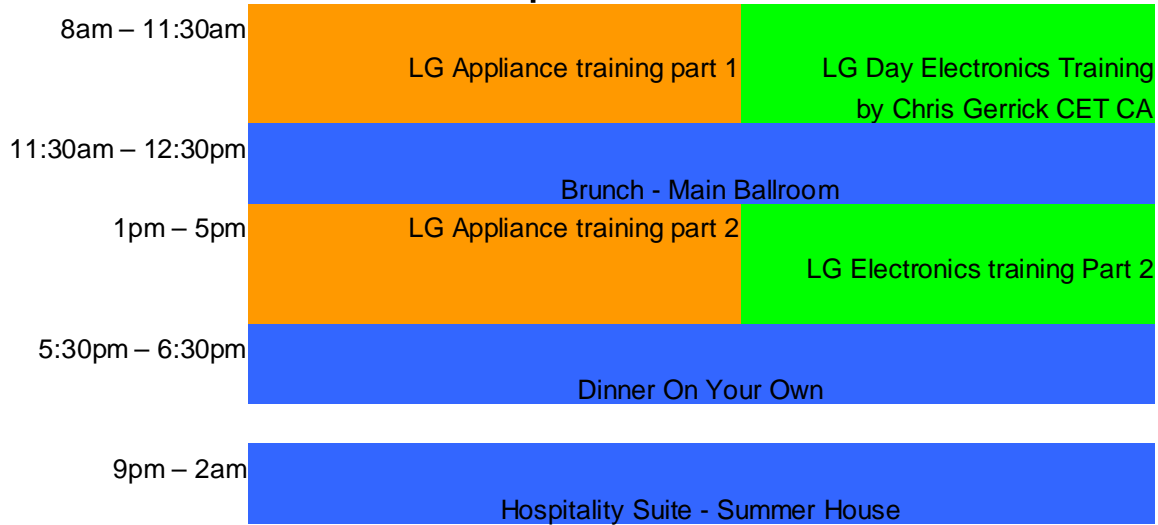
This is just my personal opinion and does not necessarily reflect the views of the board of directors of SESDA.

Mark Wentowski

SESDA Vice President

NESDA Region 2 Director

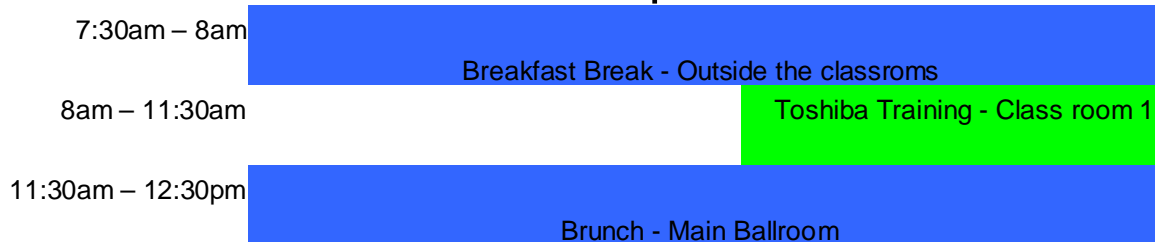
Wed Apr 6



Thu Apr 7



Fri Apr 8



1pm – 4pm	Phillips/Funai Training - Classroom 1
4:30pm – 6pm	State of the industry Fourm - TBA Trade Show ! - TBA Hospitality Suite - Summer House
6:30pm – 8:30pm	
9pm – 2am	

Sat Apr 9

7:30am – 8am	Breakfast Break - Outside the classrooms
8am – 11:30am	Mitsubishi Training
11:30am – 12:30pm	Brunch - Main Ballroom
1pm – 5pm	Tenitive Triage Training - classroom 1
5:30pm – 6:30pm	Diner
9pm – 1am	Hospitality Suite - Summer House

Trunkslammers

When I think of the term "trunk-slamers" I am reminded of a situation that happened to me personally.

My neighborhood was hit by a small tornado. Some of my neighbors had extensive damage, some didn't. I had to get my roof replaced due to wind damage taking out a few patches of shingles. In the days following the tornado, I received more than a few knocks on my door from "general contractors" that could "save me money".

When I asked for credentials, only one could provide me with any. The one that could, provided me with an out of state license. I then asked if he was licensed in GA, and I was told that he didn't need a GA license to work in GA. So, of course, my next question was, "Are you insured?" He then said it wasn't worth his time to provide that info. Needless to say, I didn't give the job to any of them, and instead hired a licensed AND insured company to repair my roof. These are the type of people I think of when thinking of a trunk-slammer. They grab tools from their trunk, do the work (usually not to par with professional grade work,) put their tools away, slam their trunks and drive away. Good luck finding them if you find fault in their work.

Well, the same applies to our industry. There are so-called technicians out there that say they can repair your electronics, but

have no formal training, and are certainly not licensed or insured. Fortunately, in the information-age that we are in today, most customers keep themselves up to date, and do not get duped by the trunk-slamers out there, and make informed decisions when it comes to getting needed repairs. Those of us that take pride in providing quality repairs by properly trained technicians, while insisting on providing the highest customer service that we can, need not worry. Most consumers are savvy and don't fall for the truck-slamers of the world, and I thank God for that!!!

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Tom Brucker
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I know one when I see one. Trunk slammers have been around for years, primarily in the appliance and HVAC fields. They do not have an address, are selective about accepting only easy money jobs, have little parts and technical support, and, what gives them a great financial advantage, low tax and insurance overhead. When TV display technology created the need for frequent lamp replacement, simple in-home service requests grew to become a significant portion of all calls. Armed with a box of bulbs and a screwdriver, virtually anyone with cell phone could enter the TV repair business.

For a traditional bricks and mortar repair center to compete with trunk slammers, contrasts need to be drawn, through web page marketing, and in the telephone and person to person conversations that present themselves. Emphasis placed on the building, through pictures, maps, and the staff inside create a marked contrast to a technician in a Corolla who only has a first name. When customers call for service, our technician will call the customer and review the symptoms. By connecting the voice on the phone to the actual service call, a relationship is formed that contrasts to an anonymous dispatched gee...er, trunk slammer. Linking a estimate to some sort of relationship is important when competing against price alone. Communicating clearly that full service repairs, and especially warranty repairs (if applicable) further differentiates the choice of service

providers. Providing a simple one or two step repair price with a clear description of what will be done offers a price shopper clear choices. My Honda dealer offers 15 minute oil changes, but also washes my van as a bonus, and their advertising clearly reminds customers of this additional level of service.

For every service operation an additional opportunity to beat trunk slammers at their own game becomes a matter of letting a bit of the control and oversight relax, and adding communications tools to the technicians' tool cases. Remaining mindful of contrasts between Remote Technicians and trunk slammers is an essential marketing element, for the slammers will still enjoy an overhead advantage. All of us know that any attempt to hire 100 remote techs will break down under the weight of 25% fraud and 25% poor complete ratios, yet the challenge of adding a remote technician can be met by hiring within a manageable circle of trust. If there is one thing an established service business has, it is knowledge and relationships, and utilizing these assets will enhance the transitional challenges of adding Remote Technicians to your service capabilities.

Neil Mengel

Florida

This month's topic of discussion has me a bit confused as to what to write about. In my mind a person working on television equipment outside of normal procedures with no license, no insurance, no permanent location, no affiliation and no continuing education would be in this category. What does this mean to the customer? Does the customer get a good, fair deal? Is the customer being charged for something that would be under a warranty? Is the customer being treated in an honest and fair way? Does the golden rule still mean anything? Maybe I better cite the golden rule. **DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD HAVE THEM DO UNTO YOU** "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7/12 NKJ) Simply stated: That we are to treat other people as we wish to be treated ourselves. Some people have the belief that the definition in today's world is "He who has the gold makes the rules." Or "Do others before they can do you! How does this affect others who are operating in a normal ethical and honest manner? Is it fair to all concerned? How does this change the playing field in the electronics industry?

I have asked many questions; now let's explore some possible answers. I have seen some very organized, well equipped and well managed mobile operations that anyone would be proud to have. The bottom line is that of doing a service for a fair price in a reasonable amount of time to satisfy a customer and in doing so also satisfying a manufacturer/distributor with good, efficient customer service. The mobile service that I am referring to is licensed, insured and reputable, however, since a lot of areas don't require certified technicians to work on home entertainment electronics it is conceivable that anyone that has tools, a means of transportation, some knowledge and motivation could be engaged in the business of home electronics repair without the proper licenses and insurance. If nothing goes wrong and the repairs go properly without incident, everybody is happy. Well, not exactly, the licensed and insured shops are at a disadvantage as far as pricing is concerned since their operating costs are higher due to overhead in bricks and mortar fixed locations, and a host of other fees and costs. When you do a break-even cost analysis comparing business models it's obvious that a larger profit or lower prices could be realized giving one business model a definite advantage over the other. In this economy, it's obvious that people will do what they have to do to feed their family and pay their bills. The industry as a whole could get a bad reputation and suffer because of a few bad apples.

In conclusion, what is most important? I personally think that the customer is still the one that drives the industry. Advertising, referrals, word of mouth, manufacturer war-

ranty referrals, good service, repeat business, satisfied customers, will bring business to an existing or new business model. The success or failure of a new or existing business depends on the ability of the owner/operator to analyze the costs of doing business, reduce waste and dead time, improve efficiency, cut costs wherever possible, get the latest and most up to date training, (SEEC 2011, April 6 to April 9, 2011, will be held at Lake Lanier Resort, see information at sesda.org, sign up early before the room rate discount expires), and price their services accordingly to enable a profit making enterprise. Along with proper cost control and appropriate pricing, I believe it is mandatory that any business should constantly be searching for new ways to generate new business and diversify as it is necessary for everyone to pursue new revenue sources on a regular basis. Ask for referrals from your existing customers, (if you provide excellent customer service and make your customer a friend this will come automatically). I firmly believe that up to date training is a must to keep up with the latest technology and perform in an efficient and effective manner. Always remember, the customer is always right or at least you have to make the customer think that way. Good customer relations are paramount to continued success. Whether your customer is the end user, manufacturer, Warranty Company or otherwise, you want to make and keep them happy with your services and apply the golden rule to everything you do and I believe you will or can be successful.

If you have your business in Florida and want to join FESA (Florida Electronic Sales and Service Association) please call me @904 334 8612 or send me an email @nemengel@yahoo.com Thank you for reading my column Neil Mengel SESDA Director for Florida I will also happily answer any questions about SEEC2011 that you may have. SEE YOU AT SEEC 2011 April 6 to April 9, 2011 AT LAKE LANIER RESORT North East of Atlanta. Keep up with the latest technology, good training from manufacturers, network with others in your field, have fun, meet vendors and suppliers at the trade show and share ideas and feedback with participants. May I also remind you that with this new technology revolution customer education is something that you should keep in mind as a revenue stream when electronics are becoming more dependable with possibly less service required than in the past. Often the equipment is not the problem; instead operator malfunction has become common.

Neal