



Zebra Your Edge Podcast

Host:

- **Therese Van Ryne, Senior Director of External Communications, Zebra**

Guest:

- **Richard Hudson, Chief Revenue Officer, Zebra**

Transcript

00:00:00:00 - 00:00:28:27

Therese

Welcome back to the Your Edge podcast. I'm Therese Van Ryne, Senior Director of External Communications here at Zebra Technologies, and today I'm talking to Zebra's New Chief Revenue Officer Richard Hudson. Richard isn't new to Zebra. He's played a critical role in the EMEA region for us, most recently serving as Senior Vice President and General Manager of the sales organization there. As CRO,

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Therese

Richard is now part of Zebra's Executive Leadership team, and we're looking forward to learning more about his vision for Zebra and the mutual success of our customers. Richard, welcome to the podcast.

00:00:40:25 - 00:00:44:26

Richard

Thanks. It's great to be here.

00:00:44:29 - 00:01:00:13

Therese

Excellent. I know many people are excited to see you take on this new role, Richard. At the same time, I know any time there is a change in leadership, the first thing people want to know is what else is going to change. So why don't we start by talking about what you're going to focus on out of the gate?

00:01:00:15 - 00:01:12:14

Therese

You have longevity at Zebra as well as 20 years of sales experience in the tech sector. What do you plan to focus on during your early months as Zebra's new CRO?

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Richard

Well, Therese, I think even in the first few weeks I've been in the role, I've now been out speaking to people in the field and across the various teams, and I think I've been fairly consistent with three key things I want to focus on. The first is, clearly we need to return the business to growth and we're putting a lot of focus and attention around trying to drive growth together with our partners in the market.

00:01:35:24 - 00:01:54:20

Richard

So that's going to be pretty critical as a team we think and focus on that. Second thing, or second principle, I should say, that I'm very focused on is making sure that customers and partners are at the center of everything we do. I'm very focused on that. I'm very focused on the channel and working with the channel to deliver on our vision to our customers.

00:01:54:22 - 00:02:16:15

Richard

And I think that will be really important. And the third thing I believe in is that we have to operate and collaborate as one team across Zebra itself in terms of our internal functions, but also with our partners and being successful in our go-to-

market. And I just made a comment about Zebra. You'll have to get used to me using the word "Zebra" as opposed to Zebra.

00:02:16:18 - 00:02:25:03

Richard

But those are three principles of growth: focus on customers and partners at the center of everything we do and acting as one team operating together in the market.

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Therese

Would you say those are the three reasons you were able to -and be eager to - take on this new role, I should say? Do you see this as an opportunity to drive change?

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Richard

Well, I think there's a number of things why I was keen to take it on. For me personally, it's a great new opportunity, I think, for the team customers and partners. I think, you know, I'm very customer and partner focused, and I'm very keen to help the business develop and sell ultimately solutions to our customers that are going to give them answers to problems they have.

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Richard

You know, I'm going to be very focused on trying to drive and sell outcomes - outcomes solve business problems - and try to be very focused on working with our partners to do that. So I mean, as to why I took the role on, I think it's a great opportunity for me personally, and I hope it's a great opportunity for Zebra and our partners together to accelerate out into the market.

00:03:20:29 - 00:03:31:26

Therese

Excellent. Richard, there's been a big push toward outcome-based selling both at Zebra and in the industry overall. Why is this strategy important for Zebra?

00:03:31:29 - 00:03:53:06

Richard

I think it's critical in terms of focusing around the customer. So I said customers and partners need to be at the center of everything we do. I think customers have problems, pain points, they need solving. And I think if you are able to solve those pain points for the customers, they're more likely to want to work with you and buy what you have to offer.

00:03:53:09 - 00:04:18:00

Richard

So I am very focused on outcomes and positioning outcomes, as we said. I think as our portfolio has got bigger and bigger, it becomes increasingly important for us to do that, you know, to be able to bundle together, from a customer solution, the hardware, the software - whether it's Zebra software or working with our ISV partners to package the whole thing together to address the pain points the customers have.

00:04:18:02 - 00:04:41:11

Richard

And so you're going to hear me talk more about pain points, specifically and how our solutions can help address some of the pain points that we see in the market. And those pain points are very different by vertical and very different by role in a customer, or persona at the customer as I think we're calling it. So, I think it's important that we package up solutions for the pain points that individual personas have.

00:04:41:14 - 00:04:52:07

Richard

And the way we're going to do that is focusing on outcome-based selling, and by outcome-based selling, I mean being able to take the proposition to the customer in a way that addresses the concerns they have.

00:04:52:09 - 00:05:15:28

Therese

We serve customers in nearly every global industry, and we know that they're being squeezed from so many different directions to do more faster and without spending a lot of money. What advice do you have for our listeners who are in these almost conflicting situations? How do they upgrade their systems, modernize their processes and create more efficiencies so they're better equipped to keep up with demand?

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Therese

And how do they do it when budgets are being cut?

00:05:20:04 - 00:05:38:03

Richard

Well, I think for everybody at the moment, times are tough. And I think when times are tough, you have to focus on where you can get the best return. And to get the best return, you have to understand the key challenge you have. Is that accelerating customer spend? Is that connecting with your customers better in a work environment?

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Richard

If I was to give you an example of in a retail store, you know, one of the big challenges we see is making sure that the workers within the store are connected so that they can address customers' problems more easily. And when you talk about connected, that may mean on one level, putting a mobile computer in the hand and

00:05:55:11 - 00:06:15:06

Richard

on another level, it may mean ensuring that they're able to have the right task pushed to them to be able to complete what they need to do in-store. On another level, it may be communicating between colleagues within the store. And in that sense, you know, we've built present propositions around the connected mobile worker, which would include many different products.

00:06:15:08 - 00:06:33:20

Richard

And I use that as an example because I think that's something that retailers, we understand, are really focused on driving and is a priority for them. But the priority in industries will be very different, you know, in different markets we'll see they want to connect and understand where their assets are in the trade...in the supply chain.

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Richard

How can we help people reduce the cost? So it comes back to those, I think, to understanding what the customer's pain points are, packaging that up and working with Zebra on building solutions to address that. Now, you know, your question was very specific to me, I think, which is what should we be doing to, you know, to address some of these trends and helping customers prioritize that spend.

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Richard

I think, you know, ultimately we're going to struggle to help them prioritize. I think what we can help them do is help understand their pain points and allow them to prioritize Zebra as something that's critical. And I think that's what we're seeing from many of our customers. Many of our customers have problems today, and I think we're in a very strong position to address many of those problems through different propositions to them.

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Therese

Mm hmm. If customers could only make one change going into this coming year, change one workflow, upgrade one system, introduce one capability. Is there something you think they should strongly consider? What one change could potentially deliver the greatest return on investment with the most immediate and noticeable impact?

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Richard

Well, again, I think it depends on the industry you're operating with within. Right? And I think, you know, if you're a retailer, you're always looking to increase basket size, to increase the amount your customers spend with you and ensure you're maximizing share of wallet on one level. And so I think, you know, many of the solutions we have focus in that area.

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Richard

I think it's very hard, again, to narrow down to one thing. I think what I would say is, you know, if you're working with Zebra today, then make sure you're asking the sellers who are working with you the complete proposition and the problems we can help you solve within your industry. It's very easy to put us into a box which suggests perhaps we're selling or positioning a product, and we absolutely are selling a product.

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Richard

But I think it's by understanding the broader capability that Zebra now has in the market and using that to leverage a solution to address many of the pain points you have. Many customers I speak to today tell me about refreshing their mobile computers or refreshing their printer estates or their handheld scanners. And the reality is we do that well and we do it very well.

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Richard

In fact, as as many of the listeners will know, we're number one in most of the markets we operate within. But from a

different perspective, I think I would encourage you to press the boundary a bit further and ask how you can help me with a problem as opposed to how you can help me with a point solution, because we've got some fantastic products, we got some fantastic point solutions, but as we've invested in many of these new areas, we can also go much further in addressing some of the customer pain points in the market.

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Therese

You mentioned Zebra's history of being a hardware company, and that's where the company started. But we often hear that it's not always the hardware that sways business leaders' decisions to work with us. It's the support and services we provide, the lengths we go to before, during and long after deployments to ensure they are set up for success to help solve new issues that arise.

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Therese

Have you heard this in your interactions with our customers as well?

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Richard

Yeah, absolutely. And I think it's absolutely key that we're able to position and share the complete proposition with customers. I think when people are looking to buy something from us, they're looking not just for a fantastic product today that's leading edge and leading the market, but they're looking for things that's going to stand the test of time. We've ruggedized in many instances, it's going to have the support capability behind it.

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Richard

And if you look at our service organization, our support capability now, I'd say it's second to none, certainly in our industry. But if you were to benchmark it against many other industries as well, I think we have world class services we can offer. And to the point on, you know, customers what they're buying, in many instances they are buying a product, You know, mobility for some customers isn't new and therefore they're looking to refresh maybe the mobile estate they already have.

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Richard

But for others, as you look at the different applications and use cases, they're absolutely looking to solve problems they didn't have before. To solve that problem, you often need software in the middle. I think if you think of our recent announcement around Workcloud and what we're doing in the software space there, I think that gives access to a whole variety of new applications that some customers are using, but many won't be.

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Richard

Whether that's around workforce management, task management or collaboration tools, I think they're all new things that are helping to turn some of the products we have into great solutions for customers in the market.

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Therese

Mm hmm. Would it be fair to say, Richard, that it's people who solve problems rather than technology and that anyone who is shopping for technology needs to vet the solution providers or the people as much as the solution components when making buying decisions?

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Richard

Yeah, I think so. And I think, you know, one of the things I'm very proud to say stepping into this job is how proud I am to lead such a fantastic team. And we have a fantastic team of people in the Zebra organization who I think can do just that for, you know, for our customers and partners. I think at the end of the day, of course people buy great technology and I think we have, of course, great people buying great solutions, and I think we have that.

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Richard

But I also believe very strongly in "people by people" and people by people in terms of what they're selling today, but also in terms of the plan that they're sharing, the ability to support that plan and to drive things over the longer term. I think people are critical and the teams in Zebra certainly will hear me say that more and more.

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Richard

You know, I made the point at the start as one of my principles about one team. One team is about people collaborating, sharing, innovating together within a functional organization like the one I lead across the broader Zebra and all the functions, but also out into the wider market through our partner community, our distribution community, and ultimately with our partners, with our customers, I should say, who in the end pay the bills for this.

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Therese

That's right. Speaking of people, I'm sure we have lots of customers and partners listening to this interview, some of whom may have worked with Zebra for years and some may just be joining our global community. What is it that you want them to know about you, your team and Zebra as a whole? Why should they be comfortable working with you and your team?

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Therese

In other words, why should they trust you?

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Richard

Yeah, from a channel perspective, I think personally, and if we were to look at some of the jobs I've done - you mentioned some of them earlier, Therese, I think - I spent a lot of time working on the channel. I'm very passionate about working with the channel. And if you look at the centricity of the Zebra business, it is very channel centric, I should say.

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Richard

I think if you think about the channel more broadly, you know, I'm very clear that it's a model where partners need to make money as well as Zebra, and that I'm very focused on things like partner profitability. I'm very focused on things like ensuring we train and educate the channel to be able to deliver the proposition in the best way. I want us to deliver on the proposition, being able to service and support it going forward with some of the great skills and people that we have in Zebra.

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Richard

So, I think trust is something you build. Trust actually is one of my big principles and I think trust with the channel is critical. I think trust with partners is personal. Trust with customers is critical. And you know what? Trust with our own people. So it's something I'm very passionate around. As you know, working with people I can trust and they can trust me.

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Richard

I think my track record with the channel demonstrates that over the years I've been very focused on trying to make them more successful. I think what's also very clear with the channel is the channel has evolved with us. You know, I said, we're evolving as a business, and we need our partners and distributors to evolve as well. I spent a lot of time, or we have, on this call talking about outcomes. Many of our channel partners may want to focus on just selling product, and that's great.

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Richard

But I also want to be clear we need to build specialist channels over time to focus on some of these new technologies and many people will know we've been developing a business in fixed industrial scanning and machine vision that has a specialization behind it. The software has a specialization behind it and for those that want to invest with us to drive our specializations, I'm very keen to find the right way forward.

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Richard

There's also a whole channel community out there that is very focused on influence. That may mean, you know, they don't make margin specifically from selling Zebra, but it helps them complete their offer or portfolio. So, you'll see us putting more focus around what we can do with influence partners as well. So I think your real question was around trust and hopefully I've shared with you

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Richard

I think trust is critical in every aspect and something I'm very passionate about and keen that not only am I trustworthy but the teams and the organizations do what they say and deliver against.

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Therese

As you say, trust is earned. Right? I'm curious from your perspective, Richard, what is the key to earning and keeping someone's trust in business, especially in challenging times when the supply chain is strained or other uncontrollable issues arise? Or for those who are trying to figure out who they can trust, what should they look for?

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Richard

Well, I think with our partners, you said yourself Therese, we've had many partners for a long period of time. And I think trust comes through relationships and credibility over time. But, you know, we don't always work with somebody straight away that we work with for a long period of time. And so how do you build trust in that environment?

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Richard

I think we have to do what we say we're going to do. We have to be clear on what we can do, but also what we can't do. Right? If there are projects we want to bid for, we need to be clear we want to bid. We might not bid for everything. There's no point bidding for things we don't believe we can win from the start.

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Richard

So I think being very clear in terms of the communication and the relationship is important. The relationship, I think, is it's critical, but you have to have clarity and communication and a transparent relationship with people. You know, in the channel you will often have conflict. We need to be transparent around how we manage that conflict and work with people to be open and honest in terms of how we deliver the message.

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Richard

And I think that's what gives trust over time.

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Therese

Excellent. Of course, we're with Zebra. So before I let you go, I'd like to take a look behind the stripes a little bit. You've earned your degree in mechanical engineering. Yet, you ended up in sales. How did that happen?

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Richard

Yeah, it's interesting, you know, because I was always through school and my early career, I was certainly focused on the engineering path. But I think very early on I knew I was much more akin to spending time with people and being more outwardly focused in the market towards customers and partners. So I think the engineering background gave me a fantastic start to what I do now.

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Richard

I think it helped me in terms of thinking analytically and problem solving skills. But I think, you know, deep down I always wanted to be out there on the frontline talking to customers, partners and trying to sell. So, engineering is a great start, and I think in our team, we have a variety of skills, right? And I think one of the key things I think in any business is you have diversity in terms of background, of thought, of process.

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Richard

And so I think that's key. But just specifically for me, it was engineering and I think it's a great start.

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Therese

What do you enjoy doing for fun?

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Richard

What I enjoy doing, it doesn't mean I'm necessarily very good at it. I enjoy playing golf, so I'm very keen to try and get the handicap down, although I'm not sure on how much time I'm going to get to do it in this role. But for anyone listening who's a golfer, I'd love to at some stage with the customers and partners, get out and play with you.

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Richard

And as I say, not very good at that. And I'm an avid football follower, so I'm the season ticket holder for a team for Tottenham Hotspurs or Spurs, for many of you will know. That's soccer for those of you in the U.S., football to those outside of the US. So yeah, they're my two big passions in terms of sport for sure.

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Therese

Wonderful. Well, as you get to know American football, I'll maybe influence you on who my best team is. Maybe you'd like to follow them as well.

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Richard

But, you know, it's always it's funny because I've although I've been in the UK for for most of my life, American football has been coming to the UK. So most recently I was at the Spurs stadium on the Tottenham Stadium to watch one of the NFL games because now we're seeing NFL games and in Tottenham and we've had some in Wembley as well.

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Richard

So I've been to a few NFL games learning about it, but a lot to learn, I think.

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Therese

Yes, Yes. Very good. Richard, one final serious question for you. As people around the world pause to reflect on the past year and plan for next year, it can be just as easy to set aspirational goals as it can be to say that goal is too ambitious. If our listeners want to make tangible progress in the next year toward their business goals, if they want to feel that they have made positive changes by this time next year, what type of things should they be thinking about going into the new Year?

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Richard

Yeah, I think first of all, I think aspirational goals are good. I think it's always good to have a target you want to try and achieve and to aspire towards that point or that moment in time. I think as we look at next year, you know, we need to look realistically. I think we've had a very challenging year this year for many reasons, and we've seen customers slow down their spend.

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Richard

We've seen our channel having to destock some of their inventory. And as we go into next year, I'm hoping some of those dynamics will change. In fact, only yesterday I believe - after the holidays in the US, the Thanksgiving holidays - the reports on your shopping uptick seems very positive. So I think that's a great indicator that we're going to see some sign of movement towards improved spending from customers.

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Richard

But I think as we think about next year as well, we need to be thinking about what are the critical things, even in a tough environment, the customers need to solve. Come back to that pain point. Where the pain points now and what can we do to address that? I think we need to be realistic in our goals, but I think the one thing I would encourage people to do is, if you're working with Zebra, make sure you're sharing with your customers and partners everything we have to offer for our part of the community.

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Richard

If you were to reflect back on next year, I would encourage you - as I would for our own sellers to say - what are we taking forward this year that you didn't previously? So maybe today you are selling one or two of that product. You should look at some of the solutions. Some of them are closer adjacencies to what we have today.

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Richard

Not everything is taking the whole step towards taking or selling workforce management or machine vision or industrial automation. But there are things we can both on to the core like VisibilityIQ to give people better asset visibility of your device estate. There's things like Intelligent Cabinets, there's many of these things that are just a small incremental step. So whether you want to go for the big aspirational goal and really try and go all in to accelerate the overall business or just take a small step change, depending on what your business looks like now, work with the Zebra team to think about what that means for you to think about doing something different.

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Richard

I'm pretty convinced at some stage we're going to see a turn in the market. I'm convinced we're going to see an uptick. The actual point of the uptick is very unclear at the moment. As we've said on multiple calls, we're not seeing those signs right now from customers wanting to move in and make those, you know, those large deal purchases.

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Richard

But at some stage it will come and they will want to refresh. They will need to refresh and as a team, Zebra and our partners, we need to be there together, positioned to do that. And when we look back at the end of '24 on the year behind us, I think we need to make sure we positioned ourselves from the start.

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Richard

And that positioning really comes back to now preparing our plan for 2024 and getting ready to go out and execute as we go into the new year.

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Therese

Excellent. Well, Richard, I always enjoy speaking with you and I'm thrilled that you're going to be steering the Zebra customers success strategy moving forward. I know you're going to energize the team and continue to drive our focus on helping people solve problems and create new ways of working. Thank you so much again for speaking with us. And I look forward to catching up with you again soon.

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Richard

Thanks to raise I look forward to following up with you as well as speaking to many of our customers and teams out there in the field over the coming weeks and months. Thanks a lot and see you all soon.

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Therese

Absolutely. Thank you, Richard. I'm Therese Van Ryne, signing off until next time.



NA and Corporate Headquarters
+1 800 423 0442
inquiry4@zebra.com

Asia-Pacific Headquarters
+65 6858 0722
contact.apac@zebra.com

EMEA Headquarters
zebra.com/locations
contact.emea@zebra.com

Latin America Headquarters
zebra.com/locations
la.contactme@zebra.com

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