

Dave Long always had ambitious entrepreneurial dreams, but they were well-grounded from the start.

Now recognized as the leading authority in the multi-billion dollar electrostatic discharge (ESD) industry, Long has helped thousands of companies select the right anti-static flooring. He has been dedicated to educating the industry and providing customized flooring solutions in multiple static-control environments. Yet it wasn't until he took control of his own destiny, by opening Staticworx in 2006, that he started to revolutionize the industry.

### The Leader in Anti-Static Flooring

When Dave Long first opened Staticworx, he worked in a tiny office furnished with low-priced IKEA desks and shelves. Staticworx wasn't a high-risk start-up, though, because Long knew he could leverage his 30+ years of industry experience. Yet he also knew that ESD, "the invisible threat," had created a \$5 billion industry problem that was exacerbating as computer chips were getting smaller and less able to withstand electrical charges, leading to equipment failure and shutdowns.

Long believed that if he provided the right information, he could help companies get grounded. So he established the industry's first business model that promised factory-direct service; static-free, earth-friendly products; and no middleman markups. That model has paid off, as Staticworx grew significantly despite a severe recession. **In fact, in 2010, Staticworx was honored as the third fastest-growing company by the *Boston Business Journal*.**

Today, Staticworx continues to prosper as North America's most trusted supplier of anti-static and fault-tolerant flooring solutions.

### The Entrepreneurial Roots

Long, 54 years old, realized at an early age that he had a drive to excel. Growing up in Worcester, Mass., he was independent and entrepreneurial. While still in grade school, he somehow managed to start two business ventures: a local newspaper and a ski slope. During this time, Long had his first taste of entrepreneurial success, as he connected the value of listening to needs before firing off solutions.

When Long was in ninth grade, his family's house burned down, and everything was lost—but Long learned another important lesson: the value of persevering and starting over.

College proved to be a circuitous journey, starting in 1973 with Worcester Polytechnic Institute (and ending 19 years later). After one semester, he left WPI to study electrical engineering at Lowell Tech. In 1975, he withdrew from school and landed a job in sales.

### The Ground Floor

Long's first job as an adult started in 1976, when he joined Julie Industries in Billerica, Mass., a manufacturer's rep firm of anti-static products. As the first employee at Julie, Long began to learn the intricacies of ESD, and his boss became his mentor. Julie's focus at that time was ionizing equipment that solved contamination

problems at industrial sites. Long started making customer calls to these facilities, dealing with engineers and scientists many years his senior.

Julie's business grew and diversified, and Long became Julie's leading sales and technical person. What Long lacked in formal training, he compensated for with his intuition. He learned on the fly, satiating his need to soak up as much information as he could. At this time, Long began to understand the confusion and misinformation in the ESD industry...and the need to bridge the technical and practical sides of the business.

During the '80s, Long solved ESD problems for industry giants like AT&T, DEC, Raytheon, and Lockheed. He gave educational seminars to organizations such as the FDA and the ESD Association. And he became known as the answer man in the industry, distinguishing himself by achieving several industry breakthroughs:

- He introduced a revolutionary container design for sensitive circuit boards that became the *de-facto* standard at most Fortune 500 electronics and aerospace companies.
- He introduced the concept of testing material for voltage suppression and draining static charges.
- He was the first in the industry to recognize the unique ability of rubber flooring to inhibit static in environments that have zero tolerance for static.
- He was the first to champion the role of fault-tolerant products (which perform despite antagonistic conditions that make other flooring products fail).

In the early '90s, while Long's career was flourishing, he still felt the need to complete his schooling. So he enrolled at Boston College, where he took courses in the evening and on weekends. In 1997, he finally graduated, *summa cum laude*, and accepted the diploma for his graduating class.

The next year, it was time for another entrepreneurial venture.

### The Testing Grounds

From 1993 to 2000, Long ran a manufacturer's rep company called Protek Solutions. He established a diversified static-control product line, including measuring instruments, chairs, and packaging. Among his principals were his former employer, Julie Industries, and United Technical Products (UTP), an ESD carpet company.

*"To achieve triple-digit growth in this environment is truly extraordinary."*

—George Donnelly, Editor,  
*Boston Business Journal*

In 2000, fueled by his desire to build a diversified, static-control “super company,” Long once again joined forces with Julie, folding his successful rep firm into the new business.

Recognizing the importance of technical leadership, Long established the brand Staticsmart and helped Julie greatly expand its revenue, going from under \$3 million to over \$7 million in three years. Long was responsible for about 70% of Julie’s sales.

Still, something was missing. Long realized that a bridge between the technical and the practical...between the manufacturer and the end user...still needed to be built. Despite his branding efforts, his success was hampered by the view that his company was a reseller of other companies’ niche products.

The next step for Long was Staticworx.

### The Need for a Better Mousetrap

In putting together the business plan for Staticworx in 2006, Long focused on what wasn’t working in the industry. For some time, Long had been frustrated by a disconnect in the sales supply chain. In the traditional model, manufacturers sell flooring to distributors, distributors sell flooring to contractors, contractors sell flooring to end users, and local agents also get a piece of the pie. Not only does this multi-tiered process add 25% to 50% to the cost of goods, but it also blurs the communication of information throughout the chain. Traditional factories don’t work with contractors because they are insulated by their distributors, which don’t have technical know-how because they don’t specialize in anti-static flooring. Meanwhile, related concerns like floor prep, installation, certification, and maintenance typically get shuffled to third parties that have no stake in the relationship. Obviously, the loser in this equation is the end user.

Long was also troubled by a related disconnect between the static-control industry and the architecture and design community. As electronics were becoming more vulnerable to ESD, architects became increasingly motivated to find a resource to help them match the right floor to their client’s environment. But while flooring manufacturers know flooring, and static-control people know static prevention, neither have much knowledge about the other. This puts architects in a bind because the information they receive from flooring people isn’t always consistent with information they receive from static control providers.

In addition, Long was frustrated by another issue that thwarted communication: the fact that the static-control industry uses technical jargon that’s unfamiliar to people outside the industry. For example, some static dissipative tile might be marketed as an anti-static flooring solution, but it may not meet the needs of most applications unless it’s polished with special waxes. The point is, ESD is a very specialized industry, and without an understanding of the principles and the terminology, architects and facility managers can’t tell if they are specifying the proper floor.

Unfortunately, when a floor that doesn’t meet specs is installed, the results range from partial equipment malfunction to catastrophic fires and explosions.

Again, end users suffer as a result of industry shortcomings.

### The New Model

In launching Staticworx, Long eliminated layers in the supply chain, streamlining the process to reduce costs and improve

communication. In his new operation, Long had an opportunity to seize control of the process...to combine his knowledge of electronics and flooring with practical applications...and to provide a single, accountable source from start to finish. Working closely with contractors, he ensured the proper installation of floors in any environment.

The results speak for themselves. Staticworx began to drive traffic to its web site, and the company was soon flooded with requests. Long hired customer service reps like Chris Hughes, with 25 years of technical experience in the static-control business, and expanded the company’s product line, offering comprehensive, company-branded, best-in-class, anti-static products. Long opened factories in the United States and overseas as well as warehouses on each coast. And he formed long-lasting business partnerships.

Using a web-based, free information approach, Staticworx quickly gained a reputation as problem solvers and educators.

Today, Long is the most widely quoted expert in the industry. He writes ongoing articles for trade journals, maintains a blog, presents numerous seminars (including CES credits for architects), posts a Knowledge Center on the company’s web site, and answers technical questions...all free of charge. This information-sharing is unique in the industry. And Long is happy to assume this role, since the more he and his associates enlighten their colleagues and clients—whether in electronic manufacturing plants or real-world environments like data centers and mission-critical operations—the more solutions his company will provide.

The Staticworx product line-up, offering the widest selection in the industry, includes rubber, tile, carpet, epoxy, and adhesives—whatever fits the unique requirements of the job. All Staticworx products are made in ISO-certified factories and meet international static-control standards, including Class-0 ESD, and come with lifetime warranties. Many products may help companies earn LEED certification, and all are VOC-free and phthalate-free.

### The Future

What does Long foresee for the future of the industry? A greater need for fault-tolerant solutions that provide the best anti-static protection in any environment. In particular, the ESD Rubber product that he pioneered is best-suited for this purpose, and it is becoming the solution of choice in many manufacturing facilities, call centers, laboratories, and other mission-critical sites.

In short, in an industry where standards are not always strictly enforced, Long expects that Staticworx will continue to set the standard for excellence. And Long continues to set ambitious goals in his quest to further his leadership role. As clients embrace his business model, and industry accolades and client testimonials enhance his company’s credibility, Long expects sales to double in the next two years.

But Long doesn’t just measure success in financial terms. He knows there’s a way to go before his dreams are realized and industry matters are truly under control.

Ultimately, his goal is to create more environments that are static-free and worry-free. To do this, Long will step up his efforts to educate the industry from the bottom up. The result, he’s convinced, will be safer worksites, a greener planet, and healthier bottom-lines.