



Dick Neumann
Director of Special Projects
Grayhill Inc.

With so many ERA members, it is not easy to get to know every rep, manufacturer and distributor in the business. "Someone You Should Know" is The Representor department that gives readers the chance to learn about fellow ERA members, including how their time is spent both in and out of the office.

Meet Richard Neumann, director of special projects at Grayhill Inc., located in La Grange, Ill.

The Representor asked Richard a few questions about his time in the electronics manufacturing business and his experiences with ERA. Here is what he had to say.

Tell us a little about yourself.

I live in Bartlett, Ill., with two of my three adult children and have lived in the same house for 47 years. I don't think I am someone you should know in the electronics industry ... maybe 20 years ago. I have been at Grayhill for 43 years where I started as a regional sales manager, worked my way up to vice president of sales and marketing, and now working my way back down ... Currently, I'm director of special projects and report to our president, Brian May. I do love working and that is why I still work at 79.

What are some things you enjoy outside of the workplace?

I enjoy golf, dining out and travelling with the many friends I have met in my years in the industry. I have spent many weeks for years on Cape Cod with Jill and Bob Walsh around the Sager Golf Outing. I also have been to Alaska three times; once with a buyer and her husband who have been out of the electronics business for 30 years (we met when she was a buyer at Hughes Aircraft in the early '80s).

How long have you been an ERA member and how long in the electronics manufacturing business?

I have been an ERA member since 1992. Ray Hall wanted to start a manufacturing group within ERA and reached out to Cherry Electronics, Littelfuse, Grayhill and a small group of Chicagoland and Wisconsin manufacturers. The one thing we had in common was that we all used multiple-line reps and started what is now a strong ERA manufacturing group.

I have been in the industry since 1964. After graduating from TCU in 1962 and a short time in the army, I joined Standard Coil where we made drum-type tuners for TVs. We bought Grigsby, a switch company, in 1965. I became the materials manager, and after a few years, became a direct salesman. I left the company in 1974 and became an ERA member rep for Hill-Gray. After two years, I went to work for Grayhill. Yes, we were a rep firm that became a manufacturer. So, I guess that is about 55 good years in the industry. I currently work for a company that just celebrated 75 years in business.

How did you become interested in

being a manufacturing executive in the electronics industry?

I was lucky and in the right place at the right time. The job market in 1964 was not great, so I took a job in materials and the rest is history.

Briefly describe your company.

Grayhill is an innovative 75-year young company that manufactures components and systems in human-interface solutions for the military, off-road and medical markets, as well as components for all industries.

What recent innovations, best practices and/or changes has your company made?

Our innovation is product-related. The latest is our new touch encoder. Take a look at our website as it is cool. As far as best practices ... our pick-and-place line is state-of-the-art and set up for our type of business.

What have you learned and/or what contacts have you made through ERA that have had the greatest positive impacts on you and/or your business?

The contacts I made through ERA in many cases have become lifelong friends. Grayhill reps are like family, and when I lost my wife, they came from all parts of the country for the services (this was special). I still talk to East Coast reps on the way to work (6 a.m. CST and West Coast reps on my way home). We solve most of the world's problems — both business and social. Receiving the ERA Key Award in 2008 was very special to me and the only time I ever saw Bob Walsh nervous. The knowledge shared at ERA conferences among manufacturers and between manufacturers and reps has been helpful.

Are you active on social media? Do you follow ERA? Have ERA updates via social media been helpful to you?

I am not active on social media. I follow friends on Saturday morning and Grayhill posts on Facebook.

What is one interesting fact that people may not know about you?

After 10 years of feeling sorry for myself (after losing Carolyn), I have met a special lady (the lovely Laura).