

35-Year Tek Veteran Takes Change In Stride

Don Tucker Originally Planned To Become A Forest Ranger

When Don Tucker came to Tektronix in 1958, Edsels were in showrooms, Elvis was really alive, and the boys of summer were still boys.

Twenty-two years old and still in college, Don had originally planned to become a forest ranger. "My idea was fishing and hunting in the national parks for a living," he recalls. His first year of instruction, though, was spent looking at leaf structures under a microscope and learning botanical terminology. "I decided that maybe forestry wasn't for me after all."

Don had already formed an interest in electronics, however, especially in amateur radio, for which he has held a license since 1954. "I had several friends working at Tek, and one talked me into placing an application," he says. "I've never once regretted coming to Tek. I've had the opportunity to work for many great people, been able to live where I want, and had wonderful educational opportunities (he completed his MBA in 1981)."

What he remembers most about his first day was a large chalk board which listed daily the company's business: customers that each product was earmarked for, how quality standards were being adhered to, inventory levels, and the number and type of products being completed. "What most impressed me was that the most critical statistics of the company could be written in chalk in a single place," he recalls.

At the time, Tek's Beaverton operations were housed in what is now Building 19, which complemented the original Sunset Highway site. "There were only 1,500 people working at Tek, and nothing out here approximated a campus."

Federal Business

Don's first job was in final assembly. Over the years he's worked in pre-production engineering, in a division which sought to produce products specifically for military applications, as an engineering manager, and as a contract administrator for Tek's commercial and federal businesses.

This introduction to government work turned out to be long-lasting. Since 1973 Don has been involved in the federal business sector, currently serving as Manager of T & M's Contract

Operations, which reviews both federal and commercial contract terms and conditions. "The government sets T & Cs (Terms & Conditions), and we have to be sure that what it requires is equal to what we can deliver." The federal government is Tek's largest domestic customer.

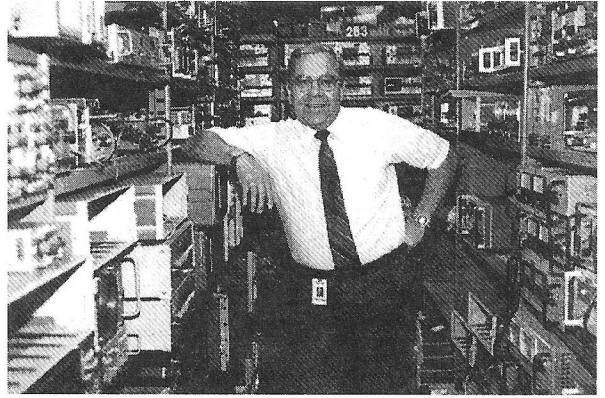
"Tek is highly respected within the federal community for its ethics, integrity, and procurement system knowledge," adds Don. He describes federal processes as predictable once an understanding develops of how government procurement operates, which centers on the government's ability to buy the best possible product at the lowest possible cost. "When dealing with a commercial company, terms and conditions are bound by what the law prohibits," he observes. "When dealing with the government, the only actions allowed are those stipulated by law. This fundamental difference produces a narrow legal and ethical environment in which to operate."

Don is also responsible for monitoring any proposed changes in procurement practices under consideration by Congress. "I work with trade associations to see that such regulations don't negatively impact our ability to do business with the government," he notes.

For this reason, Don serves on a number of association committees focused on federal procurement standards. "When I find instances that are detrimental to the interests of the company, I try to work through the trade associations to develop a solution," he says.

After working with the government for so long, Don believes he has developed patience. "The Department of Defense, for example, may take five to seven years before a system concept requires test equipment," he says. "You have to be patient and understand how Tek can fit itself within the acquisition cycle. It's difficult for many of us at Tek to concentrate on such long-term programs, but that's where much of our federal sales come from."

Don believes that success in government business is largely dependent on understanding spheres of influence. "As a federally-funded program develops," he observes, "we have to ensure that Tek products are considered for inclusion as early as possible, and to know who will be making the buying decisions. Hopefully, when it comes time to



Don Tucker

keep these systems running, Tek instruments will provide that support."

Seeing the Changes

Don has noticed several fundamental changes in Tek's business over the years. "Customer demand for quality products is more stringent," he says, "and product life has shortened dramatically. Scopes developed in the '50s and '60s sold for years and years. Also, a portable oscilloscope that you can practically carry in your pocket today would have given you a hernia thirty years ago." Don believes that customers have changed little, however. "They still look for a quality products and quality support."

He also places Tek's strategic shift away from component manufacturing in historical perspective. "When the company began there weren't suppliers producing needed components at the technology and quality levels that we needed," he says, "so we had little choice but to produce our own. Today, quality vendors are abundant."

Among his accomplishments, Don lists his leadership role in heading up the Commercial Products Acquisition Team, a consortium of several T & M companies. "We developed a model contract to more efficiently meet the requirements of the federal acquisition environment," he says. "Our concept has been adopted by Congress, and is now part of the acquisition reform that will result in significantly-reduced costs associated with government business." In addition, Don has been appointed a Fellow of the National Contract Management Association for his years of effort in the federal contracts field.

Time has taught Don that

perseverance is an important attribute. Another critical one is adapting to change. "In the past, there wasn't the degree of urgency concerning change because no market nor competitor was moving quickly enough to warrant it," he says. "For Tek, the day of the single blackboard is over. The person who spends his time looking backward is going to stumble moving forward."

— By Charles Martin

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