



Executive of the Month: Question and Answer session with Ted Bier, P.E., president of T.M. Bier & Associates, Inc.; proud to be part of the growing effort to attain energy independence and a greener America

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The NYREJ recently sat down with Ted Bier, P.E., president of T.M. Bier & Associates, Inc. for a question and answer session.

Q. How has the building automation and controls industry changed since you started the company?

A. When we started this company, building automation was a theoretical concept that had been embraced by a very small number of innovative organizations in the United States, but was not generally known. At that time, the application of microprocessors to run physical facilities was a brand new field being explored by IBM, GE and a few other forward-looking companies. It was necessary to work with the manufacturers to help perfect equipment that could actually perform these functions.

Today, building automation is an accepted technology and the question is, "What degree of automation is cost effective for a project consistent with the customer's ability to utilize the equipment?"

Q. You had several challenging assignments for the anti-missile command of the United States Army Ordnance Corps. How did those assignments prepare you for your current role as the president of a leading building automation and controls system integrator?

A. I was responsible for maintaining five anti missile sites in the center of Alaska under extreme temperature conditions and thousands of miles from technical support and supply resources. The same skills that were needed to maintain this equipment 24/7/365 at a degree of readiness to meet the nation's defense requirements, are what we consider our obligations to our customers in providing systems that will keep their employees safe and comfortable and, at the same time, minimize energy consumption.

What is required is a blend of computer skills, engineering and good old American know-how to make things run properly.

Q. In addition to your U.S. Army service and activities, you served at several Fortune 500 companies in building automation, HVAC, system integration and project management. Can you provide some examples of some of the more challenging projects in which you were involved?

A. My civilian experience after my military service started with Johnson & Johnson in New Jersey, where I worked within the division that manufactures all of the production equipment for Johnson & Johnson worldwide. At Johnson & Johnson, we were applying state-of-the-art engineering to produce equipment that could produce tens of thousands of consumer products per hour, reliably, 24/7, and operating throughout the world. It was necessary to work with outside machine shops, part suppliers, component suppliers, and integrate these systems into a final product.

My second major assignment was for a half billion dollar retail organization, which had no technology as far as running their facilities. My skills were first employed to automate a new distribution center. Then, we were faced with the first Arab oil embargo and needed to retrofit large retail facilities, averaging 100,000 to 300,000 s/f, to make them energy efficient in an environment where local management had no technical skills.

Q. How would you describe your leadership style at TMBA? Does it model after any other executive or a former employer? How do you believe your style of leadership and management has helped you grow TMBA?

A. My leadership style at TMBA is to encourage an environment wherein outstanding performance and responsiveness to meet customer needs is fostered, and we keep in mind our obligations to customer and employee safety, as well as our obligations to produce reliable, sustainable systems. I believe that our attitude of super responsiveness, technological excellence and the dedication to our customers welfare has been the source of TMBA's growth.

Q. Today, TMBA provides a full range of building systems and related services. What is the biggest challenge you face in raising the awareness of property owners, managers and facilities personnel as to the value of TMBA's offerings?

A. The problem remains in convincing building owners that meaningful results can be obtained without major capital expenditures, and that their employees can be trained adequately to run these facilities on a reliable basis. There is still a belief that energy cost reduction is something like death and taxes, and that nothing can be done. The truth is that we can help any building reliably reduce its energy consumption and cost 20% to 30% with proper controls and properly trained maintenance employees.

Q. If there was one message you could give to every building owner in New York, what would it be?

A. The message is that lowest first cost always loses. This is the difference between the psychology in this country and in Western Europe, where they build under the concept of life cycle costing. Doing it right in the first place is always the correct strategy. The incremental cost of doing it right is very small if designed from the inception. The benefit over years in reliable equipment and efficiency lowers costs and improves safety.

Q. What are some of the professional achievements of which you are most proud?

A. Professional achievements that I am most proud of are the fact that we have received awards for innovation in installing some of the earliest BACnet systems, and that our customer retention rate is about 98%, which shows that our customers understand the value we are providing and appreciate the true 24/7 attitude that our entire organization has. We are proud to be part of the growing effort to attain energy independence and a greener America.