



John Beaver
President
GSA Optimum

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

For this profile, meet John Beaver president of GSA Optimum. He has been in the rep business for 34 years and has been active in ERA for most of that time. He now serves as president of the New York ERA Chapter.

Through his many years in the business, Beaver has grown both personally and professionally, and he has also come to rely on ERA's resources and presence during his rep career. The Representor asked him a few questions about his time and experiences as a rep. Here's what he had to say.

How long have you been a member of ERA?

I have been associated with ERA since 1986.

What is it about ERA that makes you continue your membership?

ERA has taught me how to be a better rep. My organization would not be what it is today if it was not for the many things I learned from ERA and fellow reps.

Today, our local chapter has taken ERA to the next level by having multiple dinner meetings with high-level buyers as our guest speakers. These events provide the members of my firm and me additional contact with key industry people as well as the distributor salespeople who call on them.

How long have you been in the rep business?

Thirty-four years. My first job out of college was in purchasing for an electronic instrumentation manufacturer. The reps I met intrigued me. When one offered me a job as an outside salesperson, I jumped at it.

Please briefly describe your rep firm.

In 1984, at age 26 – with one child and one on the way – I opened Optimum Sales Company in the Metro New York City and New Jersey area. The name has changed over the years, and today we are known as GSA Optimum.

The firm specializes in selling passive and electromechanical products to OEMs in the aerospace, military, power supply, telecommunication, industrial and security industries.

GSA has 24 employees operating out of four offices covering New England, Metro New York and New Jersey, Mid-Atlantic, Maryland and Virginia. Basically the territory extends from Maine to Virginia.

What innovations, best practices and/or changes has your firm made in the last year?

We recently adopted a new CRM system. iPads were also issued to all the outside salespeople. We expanded last year into New

England by hiring the first three of many salespeople to cover this important territory.

How has your product sector and/or marketplace changed in the last two years?

With the addition of several new lines, we are now in the passive and RF components market.

What have you found to be most rewarding about being a rep?

Every day is different. My customers and fellow reps are my friends. I have no intention of retiring. My plan is to keep calling on my friends/customers until I can't physically or mentally do it.

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

Over the years, I received a good amount of valuable advice. Most recently my peers gave me feedback as to which CRM program we should work with. Our decision was in part made because of my various conversations with fellow ERA members.

Tell us a little about yourself, outside of your work as a rep.

I have three children. The oldest is the company's distribution manager. In my spare time, I love to be out on the water boating or kite-boarding.

Kite-boarding is my passion in life. On a windy weekend when the air temperature is above 42 degrees, you will find me surfing the waters off Long Island while being pulled by a large kite.

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

I strongly believe in giving back. Last year our firm donated more than \$10,000 to various charities. My favorite is the \$300 a month non-tax-deductible contribution we make to a father of two girls who received brain damage in an auto accident.