

Russ Graham - Leadership Recall Interview

Russ Graham was the president of the New Jersey Chapter of ASHRAE in 2004-2005. I interviewed him recently. He spent four years in the Navy and then attended Somerset County College. He received a degree in computer science. I am not sure if his unique sense of humor was improved or damaged during those times. While working at Johnson & Johnson as a computer operations analyst he became acquainted with Chuck Hoffmann of Stillwell-Hansen. Chuck is also known to have a great sense of humor. The two became friends and Russ was offered a job at Stillwell-Hansen. His career in the HVAC world began. He never imagined himself as a sales person, but quickly realized that he would be dealing with peers. He could help them purchase products that he was extremely familiar with and comfortable selling.

One of his favorite stories took place just before he left Johnson & Johnson. He was dealing with an ongoing problem associated with batteries they had purchased for their UPS. The salesman was Chuck Hoffman. On his last day (a Friday), they grilled Chuck as to what he was going to do to fix their problems. Chuck committed to returning on the following Monday with answers. Russ started his new job on the following Monday. He accompanied Chuck to the follow-up meeting at J&J. He was now sitting on the opposite side of the table and he was now in the hot seat.

His best ASHRAE memories revolve around meeting with other folks from other chapters. They are faced with the same challenges and goals. The exchange of ideas about what worked or did not work was enlightening. He has enjoyed traveling to other chapters in the Region as well as to the Winter Meetings and Trade Shows. He stated that "I can only tell them that my experience on the whole has been very rewarding. There are many levels of involvement so it doesn't require a person to make a major change in their life in order to get more out of their membership." The on the job training as chapter president has served many of us well. For those interested in forming their own company, chapter president is an excellent first step.

Even though the chapter is quite large, it is possible for just a few people to have a major impact on the organization. He is concerned that the decision making process fails to include the diverse input of enough members to reflect the grass roots of the chapter. He was disappointed with the continuing struggle with participation. He found it nearly impossible to entice members to step forward and become an active part of the organization.

Russ started a manufacture's rep firm in March of 2005 with Linda Carolan. G&C Sales is located in Scotch Plains. He purchased a Honda Ridgeline truck shortly afterwards. The large vehicle has a big trunk in the bed. He enjoys people's reactions when he tells them it can hold up to two bodies. Russ continues to remain active in ASHRAE. I spotted him at the Winter Meeting in Dallas. He had his stand up routine polished and ready to go. He has been married to his wife Julie for the past 23 years. He is an avid golfer that has been known to have some difficulty keeping an accurate score. He finds golf to be an integral part of his personal and professional life.

Bob Daly
Chapter Historian

2006-2007 PRESIDENTIAL AWARD OF EXCELLENCE (PAOE) SUMMARY

Chapter #	Chapter Name	Chapter Members/students	Member Promotion	Student Activities	Research Promotion	CTTC	History	Chapter Operations	Chapter PAOE Totals
007	N.J.	831	335	640	330	665	200	895	3065