

Navy veteran runs a tight ship

CEO STRIVES TO
MATCH THE RIGHT
TECHNOLOGY TO HIS
CUSTOMERS' NEEDS



Cary Vea, who started Polytron Corporation in 1985 after serving in the U.S. Navy and working at Intel. Four of his sons now work for the company.

VICKI THOMPSON

Cary Vea doesn't put up with any nonsense.

Veas, the president and CEO of Polytron Corporation and a decorated Navy veteran, runs his company with a high degree of precision with no room for error. He has to, he said, when working on high-profile projects that could mean life or death.

A systems integration company, Polytron works on projects for the federal government and U.S. military in addition to large-enterprise corporations. They work with clients to integrate technologies such as video surveillance systems, and then support those systems on a day-to-day basis.

"When you work with large enterprise corporations or the U.S. Coast Guard or Department of Homeland Security, you have to be just about perfect on everything, or else they go get the next guys," he said.

Before Veas started Polytron in 1985, he served four years in the Navy, spending half of his tour in Vietnam supporting ground troops and on aircraft carriers and the other half in Washington, D.C., supporting the Pentagon in a secure facility.

That military service, Veas said, coupled with his experience ear-

CARY VEA

Title: President/CEO

Company name: Polytron Corporation

Age: 68

Hometown: Santa Maria

Residence: San Martin

Family: Married to Karen (Files) Veas 49 years; eight children: four boys and four girls; 14 grandchildren

Branch of service: U.S. Navy

Dates served: 1968 to 1972

Military rank: E4/E5 Data Processing Technician

Education: Graduate of Electronic Computer Programming Institute, Los Angeles

Career path: Computer operator, computer technical support, software programmer, U.S. Navy; systems programmer, manager, Intel

Inventor: US Patent 4,854,546

ly on at Intel – while the company was in its infancy – gave him comprehensive and proven management practices. He now incorporates those practices directly into his business, especially when working with high-profile clients.

"You have to have a lot of discipline and precision in what you do and be complete in every way – essentially be a subject-matter expert," he said. "If you have those kinds of qualities, you can play in the enterprise and government markets and if you don't – then you work in small business, which is much more forgiving."

Polytron works with a wide array of technologies, partnering with manufacturers around the globe to consistently incorporate top-of-the-line components in their customers' systems, Veas said. He said customers aren't typically focused on what technology they need, just the problem they need solved.

"We live in that environment – we see so much that's out there," he said. "We attempt to actually help our clients and say 'Hey, here's technology that I think is going to fit what you have, so you'll see cost savings.'"

Beyond giving him the skills to lead and succeed under pressure,

Veas said his military background helps him connect with other current and former service members. He said his experience gives him and other service members a "common background."

"[Having military experience] is kind of an unspoken thing – but it's very real in the atmosphere that you have experience, especially when you're a combat veteran," he said. "You know that the tools that you're helping create are going to a system that may involve life and death out in the mission itself."

Veas said the gravity of working on military and government projects helps employees focus their energy on something bigger than themselves. He employs a small staff, he said, but he only hires high-quality candidates and doesn't "put up with any nonsense whatsoever."

"Everybody is very sober-minded and very resolute in terms of accomplishing something for kind of a higher reason rather than just 'Gee, we hope it works,'" he said. "It's rather – we hope it works and we will guarantee to our utmost that it will because lives may be on the line."

– Kevin Burbach, contributor