Pieper attended the University of Miami in the Industrial Engineering School. At U of M, he was involved with Leadership Honorary, President of the SAE fraternity, student Lt. Governor of the Engineering School, Vice-President of Intra Fraternity Council, and Campaign Manager for Campus elections, served in Engineering Schools for Engineers Exposition and selected for Who’s Who in Colleges and Universities.

In 1961, Pieper assumed leadership of Pieper Electric, a Milwaukee electrical Service Company founded in 1947, by Julius Pieper, his father. At the time, Pieper Electric employed three electricians and operated out of the Pieper home in Milwaukee. Pieper immediately started operating on the premise of continuous employee education on the employees’ own time, but completely paid for by the company.

By the early 1970s Pieper had grown the business to include branches in 8 states across the country. The company currently employs nearly 1,800 people. Pieper Electric was rebranded in 1969 as PIEPERPOWER. As of 2020, the family of companies is united as PPC Partners, Inc. In 2003, Pieper and his family sold the majority interest in PPC Partners, Inc. to the employees. Pieper is now Chairman Emeritus of the Board of the company.

Richard Pieper devotes most of his time to expanding the role of character development in K-12 education and the model of Servant Leadership in all institutions. In 2006, Pieper started the Wisconsin Character Education Partnership (WCEP) and Wisconsin Servant Leadership (WISL). WISL is an all-volunteer, no 501C3, no checkbook operation. Its rare check writing has to do with personal donations and support efforts. WCEP recognizes schools of character across the state and was instrumental in forging a partnership with Alverno College to offer Wisconsin K-12 school principals a special leadership Academy in Character Education. WCEP also partners with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Education (UWMSE) sponsoring State Schools of Character and Promising Practices designations. South Milwaukee and Jefferson school districts sponsor the Annual Wisconsin Character Education Conference. Pieper also partnered with Tom Thibodeau to begin the Wisconsin Servant-Leader (WISL) movement with all-volunteers. That is now networked in five cities with 2,500 members – to repeat, as an all-volunteer organization not a 501C3, no checkbook. In both these cases, WCEP and WISL are intended as examples from which others, in the nation and in the world, could learn. Pieper received the American Patriot of Character Award from the Character Education Partnership presented at the 2013 National Forum on Character Education in Washington DC.

Pieper is a past recipient of The Bravo Entrepreneur Award for Lifetime Achievement and was presented with the 2009 Lakefront Leadership Award from the Milwaukee Community Sailing Center for his support of Milwaukee’s cultural lakefront corridor. Pieper was inducted into the Wisconsin Business Hall of Fame honoring him for his civic involvement. He served as Chairman of the Milwaukee Chapter of the National Electrical Contractor Association’s (NECA) and was awarded one of its highest honors, the McGraw Award, recognizing his contributions to the electrical contracting industry.

Pieper is co-founder of the Suzanne and Richard Pieper Family Foundation. Its solo responsibility is to monitor and provide feedback regarding the moral example of PPC Partners. The Piepers are significant benefactors of Discovery World and sponsors of the Pieper Education Gallery at the Milwaukee Art Museum as well as the Education Center at the Milwaukee Community Sailing Center. The Piepers gifted
$1 million to each of three Wisconsin schools to establish endowed professorships for the purpose of fostering and promoting servant leadership in institutions of higher learning. The funded Pieper Chairs include Milwaukee School of Engineering (Endowed Chair, increased funding through annual reviews at $2.6 million) the UW Madison College of Engineering, and Ripon College. Additionally, the Foundation started 13 endowments for Not for Profits (NFPs); it has challenged 10 endowments with annual appraisals to increase their performance to reach the top quartile of funds and do so with half their earnings while spending the other half on their mission. As of 2019, four of the ten are in the top quartile. Pieper currently serves on several boards: Three Harbors Council-Boy Scouts of America (formerly, he served as Milwaukee Boy Scout Council President and Regional VP of Endowments and Finance), the Milwaukee Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin & Upper Michigan, Inc. and The Florentine Opera.

Previous board participation includes the Elliot Companies in VA, Board of Trustees Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership (where he served as Chair), and Junior Achievement of Southeastern Wisconsin from whom he received the National Gold Award, Young Presidents' Organization (YPO) (Wisconsin Chair, Central Region Vice President Board–Internationally), Wisconsin Council of Economic Education, Wisconsin Diabetes Association, Milwaukee Jaycees President, the Milwaukee Art Museum (contributing major gift collections of art and sculpture), and the Boelter Companies. In the past he has been on volunteer assignments which include through YPO work in Istanbul, Turkey. Through the International Executive Corps, he contributed to establishing 3 public companies, U.S. Office Education, and with the Secretary of Education a consulting assignment, “Why Can’t They De-centralize the Office of Education”. He also consulted with Amtrak on a project called, “Why their number #1 Problem was a Problem”. He has been inducted in The Who’s Who in Finance and Business.