Talk about your background. How did you get involved in the steel industry? Was there a person who mentored you?
I began work at Republic Steel in Warren, Ohio, USA, as a co-op trainee. The general foreman of the hot strip mill and cold mill took me under their wings and worked with me and I made foreman at age 19. The superintendent told me that human resources said I needed to be 21 to be a foreman, but in those days the superintendent was the boss and he did it anyway!

When did you first hear about ISS/AIST and what was your first level of involvement?
I heard about AIST from my customers at the steel mills and OEMs who sold to the mills. I attended one of the annual conferences in Cleveland, Ohio, in the early 1970s and eventually served on the Northeast Ohio Member Chapter’s golf committee. I also presented a paper on torque amplification factor at AISTech in Indianapolis, Ind., in 2011.

How has AIST membership benefited you in your career?
It has kept me up to date with the newest technologies, kept me in touch with the leaders in the industry and helped my career growth.

How have you seen the industry change since you started?
I have had a chance to see the industry go from 10 man-hours per ton to about 2 man-hours per ton. I have watched us go from open hearths to BOFs and blooming mills to casters. Steel has gone from iron with some additives to steel made to a specific chemistry for a particular job.

At AIST, we’re always looking to inspire the next generation of steelmakers. What advice would you give to young professionals who are just coming into the steel industry?
Join a team that will work with you. Be willing to work and you will see the benefits of the extra work. When you first start at a steel mill, you will know immediately if it is the right fit for you. I have heard this from a number of people that they knew it was a fit the day they walked into a mill.

H.R. (Rich) Hutter earned his engineering degree from the Fenn College of Engineering at Cleveland State University. He earned his M.B.A. and M.S.M. degrees from Case Western Reserve University’s Weatherhead School of Management. He began his steel industry career as a co-op at Republic Steel Corp. His prior work experience includes sales and engineering positions at Babcock and Wilcox Corp. and Eaton Corp.

He is currently a partner in Belden-Hutter, a manufacturer’s representative firm in northeast Ohio. Hutter has served as an instructor and program director at Cleveland State University’s Evening Program. He is also the author of Profit: Plan for It, Get It — The Entrepreneur’s Handbook.