35-year life member

Joseph Dzierzawski

Joseph Dzierzawski received his B.S. degree in material science and engineering from the University of Michigan in 1988, paying the full amount off by working full time and receiving multiple scholarships. He went on to supplement his education with management and executive programs at the University of Michigan School of Business Administration and INSEAD in 1999 and 2017, respectively. Since then, he has built a distinguished career in the engineering, manufacturing, and materials industries, with a strong focus on capital equipment, intralogistics and metallurgical plant development. With over 30 years of experience, Dzierzawski has held prominent leadership roles at various companies including Primetals Technologies USA LLC, BEUMER Corp. and SMS USA LLC. Throughout his career, he has driven substantial growth, led multimillion-dollar projects, secured billions of dollars in major capital orders, and built high-performing teams. As a published author and patent holder, he has made significant contributions to the evolution of continuous casting and other metallurgical technologies. He has served on the boards of both AIST and American Iron & Steel Institute, becoming a foundation trustee for the former in 2024, while also a member of the Steel Manufacturers Association and and the Engineers' Society of Western Pennsylvania. A strong civil leader for education, underprivileged families, and community outreach, he also contributes to food banks, literacy programs and shelters. When he's not leading organizations or supporting his community, Dzierzawski is an avid runner, golfer, sports enthusiast and devoted father.

When did you first hear about AISE/ ISS and how? Was there someone who introduced you to the association?

I joined SMS Concast in 1990 as a young caster start-up engineer. I was fortunate to work with strong leadership/ technology pioneers that encouraged me to become involved in both AISE and ISS. Key career influences were Herb Fastert, president and chief executive officer; Joe Farina, vice president sales and operations; and Mike Poran, vice president engineering.

What was your first level of involvement in AIST? How did your involvement progress over the years?

I joined the Continuous Casting Technology Commitee and began writing and presenting technical papers at various conferences, including AISTech. Subsequently, I joined the association's Executive Committee and Board of Directors and the Foundation Board of Trustees as the Treasurer for a seven-year period. Since, I've remained a member of the board of trustees for the last three years, focused on recruiting young talent into the steel industry.

How has AIST membership benefited you in your career?

It's an incredible source to network and establish lifelong relationships. It helped build/guide my career and create countless business opportunities.

Talk about your career path. How did you enter the steel industry? How has the industry progressed from when you started to the present day?

I first started as a young melter/supervisor at McLouth Steel, just down river from Detroit. Looking back, my responsibilities were hard to imagine – a youngster just out of college responsible for a crew of 20ish union employees, making molten steel and tapping heats from both a basic oxygen furnace (BOF) and electric arc furnace (EAF) operation while working rotating shifts. The main industry change has been the growth of technology. I was fortunate to be a young engineer with SMS when compact strip production (CSP) technology was in its infancy stage, and while many doubted the possibility of a mini-mill producing high-quality sheet products, the technology continued to evolve resulting in the progression of the U.S. producing 70% of its output via EAF steelmaking. This was significantly advanced through smart electrics and automation.

Are there any current projects within the industry you are working on?

I'm proud to be a member of Primetals Technologies, who are arguably one of the market leaders in advancing green steel technology. We just started up the first U.S.-based endless strip production (ESP) plant at Big River Steel – A U. S. Steel Co., which is the most energy-efficient process for producing hot-rolled coil. Also, we're a leader in the European transition to green steel, currently executing major transformational projects at Salzgitter, voestalpine Stahl and Dillinger Hütte.

If you were to recommend AIST to a new graduate just coming into the industry, what would you tell him/her?

I would highly encourage them to become involved – Technology Committees, local Member Chapter events, papers chair, technical presentations and AISTech of course. AIST has recently made it easier by creating the Young Professionals Committee to help facilitate involvement. ✦