



# MWFA, NFDA, and Pac-West Hold Joint Conference

*Press release of NFDA*

In a great show of industry unity, the Mid-West Fastener Association, the National Fastener Distributors Association, and the Pacific-West Fastener Association held a joint conference March 13-16, 2019 in San Diego, California.

More than 225 people attended the conference, which featured timely and relevant education, many opportunities for networking with industry peers, fun social events, and a fantastic destination.



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This meeting was made possible by the generous support of our sponsors.

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## EDUCATION

The conference education kicked off on March 15 with a demonstration of the Industrial Fastener Institute's online tools for accessing current standards and technical data, presented by Salim Brahimi and Joe Greenslade.

Next up was Dirk Beveridge's eye-opening message on business innovation, "The Path to Winning in the Age of Rapid Change." This presentation detailed:

- The pull of legacy all businesses face
- The fog of uncertainty created by the age of rapid change
- The significant inflection points business leaders must address today
- The decision point that will define their organization's future
- The innovative mindset that is imperative in today's world



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A panel presentation of fastener industry luminaries will cover “What’s the Future of Fastener Distribution?” Employment pressures, the Amazon effect, balancing customer demands with productivity, and the rapid growth of technology all will change the ways fastener distributors do business over the next few years. Panelists Mike Bailey (Nucor Fastener), Bill Derry (Field), and Marc Strandquist (Würth Industry North America), along with moderator Bryan Wheeler (Star Stainless Screw) discussed the many outside forces creating change in the distribution supply chain.

The first day of education continued with a lunch program on “The Economic Impact of E-Commerce,” presented by Kirk Zehnder (Earnest Machine Products). E-commerce is a huge opportunity that most industrial distributors are missing. The forecast for B2B e-commerce is great and the ROI is significant. The customer profile is changing and with that comes new expectations about what a company’s website should do. In this session, attendees got real numbers that provided overwhelming support for designing and implementing an e-commerce platform.

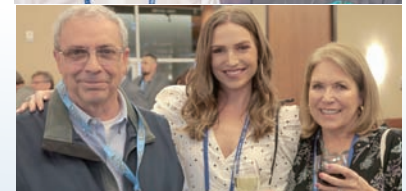
Peer-to-peer learning is the best education you can get. We made this possible through the Business Owners Roundtables and Business Executives Roundtables. Two different sessions: one for business owners and one for key executives. The roundtable format allowed for smaller group discussions, making input easier.

The second day of conference education began



with “Artificial Intelligence – Getting Started.” Artificial Intelligence (AI) uses algorithms to mine large amounts of data so that machines think like humans, performing tasks that require reasoning, planning, learning, and understanding language. We encounter AI applications even if we don’t realize it: Siri, Amazon’s product recommendation engine, Google Maps route recommendations, and more. These consumer AI experiences are raising the bar for business. Jeff Gusdorf, a principal in Brown Smith Wallace’s Business Process and Systems Group, presented an overview of basic AI concepts, took a deeper dive into AI applications for salesforce automation and business analytics, and proposed a plan for tackling an AI project.

The conference education concluded with economist Christopher Thornberg (founding partner of Beacon Economics and director of the UC Riverside School of Business Center for Economic Forecasting) speaking on “The Trade War Experiment: Evaluating the Results.” The U.S. economy had been on a solid growth path when, at the start of 2018, the Trump administration started imposing punitive tariffs on our trading partners and pushed for major changes in U.S. trade treaties. How has this grand trade experiment impacted the U.S. economy? How does it fit in with the domestic determinants of economic health? Will it threaten U.S. expansion in the future? Dr. Thornberg answered these and other questions about the U.S. economy. ■



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