



**Q1:** First of all, congratulations on your new appointment as NFDA president. Could you please share your thoughts on being elected as president of the association for 2025-2026? At the same time, could you please briefly talk about your professional background and past industry experience, and how these background and experience will help you play the new role?

A: Thank you, it's truly an honor to give back to an industry that has given me so much over the past 30 years. I got my start in the fastener business as a young man working in a warehouse, learning the ropes of products, operations, and everything in between. I spent nearly two decades in master distribution with Porteous Fastener Company and continued with Brighton-Best after the acquisition. For the past 10 years, I've been part of the Procurement team at Wurth Industry USA.

Having grown from warehouse roles to regional sales at Porteous, I've had the opportunity to work closely with a wide range of distributors and develop a strong understanding of their needs. Now, on the procurement side at Wurth, I've gained a new perspective on the challenges facing distributors—both large and small—and how those challenges continue to evolve.

**Q2:** Tariffs against all steel and aluminum imports and exchange rates are the top concerns for global fastener manufacturers in 2025. Based on your observation, what are the main impacts of these two issues on the US fastener industry (incl. manufacturers/distributors/importers)?

A: I believe there's still a fair amount of uncertainty when it comes to tariffs and exchange rates. Tariffs are intended to protect national security and support the revitalization of domestic manufacturing. However, rebuilding the infrastructure needed for steel production—and developing a skilled workforce for fastener manufacturing—will take years. In the meantime, **market demand remains steady, and imported fasteners will continue to play an essential role.** As for the impact, we're seeing rising costs and a variety of approaches in how those increases are being passed through different distribution channels.

► NFDA President Ed Smith

# Interview with NFDA President Ed Smith

*Compiled by Fastener World*





**Q3:** Apart from steel and aluminum tariffs and exchange rates, what other issues and trends are also worth paying attention to in the US fastener industry at present?

A: Business acquisition and consolidation continue to be major trends in the industry. We're seeing increased activity from private equity firms acquiring companies, as well as closures driven by a range of factors—such as owners retiring or a slowdown in demand forcing businesses to shut their doors.

**Q4:** (Following Q2 and Q3) Have US fastener distributors and importers responded to these challenges and trends in any way?

A: That's a tough question, as the challenges can vary widely depending on where you are in the market. That said, given the ongoing uncertainty, I believe it's essential for U.S. fastener distributors and importers to stay informed about tariffs, understand how they may impact their business, and be prepared to adapt accordingly.

**Q5:** Based on the latest market research reports and data indices, which fastener-demanding industries in the US do you think have a potentially growing market?

A: I believe the markets will continue to be diversified with the growing segments being tied to modernization, sustainability, and high precision manufacturing – namely EV automotive, aerospace/defense, construction/infrastructure, electronics and renewables. Demand is driven by material innovation, manufacturing automation and reshoring of key industries.



## Q6: What are the main plans and goals you wish to accomplish during your tenure as president (internally and externally)?

A: It's simple: we must stay true to our mission of helping members thrive in a global marketplace. This means continuing to grow our membership by offering fresh and meaningful learning and networking opportunities at our in-person events. We also want to provide resources that support our members in developing their teams, with a strong focus on attracting and retaining talent in the industry. Additionally, I'd like to see NFDA become more inclusive by welcoming anyone interested in what we offer, even if they feel they don't quite fit the mold. Give NFDA a chance and let us help change your perspective.

## Q7: NFDA maintains close ties with major associations in Europe, the U.S., and Asia, and many NFDA members have close partnerships with overseas fastener manufacturers. How do you plan to assist NFDA members in strengthening their collaboration with key overseas suppliers (especially those in the Taiwanese supply chain) in the future?

A: Many of our members work closely with overseas suppliers, particularly in Taiwan, a key player in the global fastener market. As an association, we aim to support these relationships through open communication and industry collaboration. It's about giving members the tools to make informed sourcing decisions, wherever opportunity aligns with their needs.



## Q8: As Taiwanese fastener manufacturers or other Asian manufacturers are part of the US fastener supply chain, what advice would you give them?

A: My advice is to stay the course and maintain open, frequent communication with your U.S. customers. While we may see shifts in certain commodity products, **demand for fasteners produced in Asia and around the world will continue.**

## Q9: What other important activities or training courses has the NFDA planned for 2025 and 2026?

A: We have two events coming up to close out 2025: **a virtual session on Fastener Certifications and Test Reports on October 1st, and our Executive Summit in Key West, FL, from October 15th to 17th.** Currently, no virtual events are scheduled for 2026, but our Learning Committee is actively reviewing key industry topics and will announce the upcoming schedule soon. **Looking ahead to June 2026, we'll gather in Indianapolis, IN, for our Annual Meeting and ESPS.**

## Q10: What are your expectations for the market outlook for 2025-2026?

A: I expect **market demand to remain steady, with moderate growth through 2026, driven by core industries such as automotive, construction, aerospace, and high-tech manufacturing.** Tariffs and exchange rates will continue to be top of mind and will undoubtedly influence sourcing strategies as we adjust to what feels like a new normal.

## Q11: Is there anything else you would like to share with our readers?

A: Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this interview. I've been a longtime reader of Fastener World Magazine, and it's an honor to share some of my insights with fellow readers. I appreciate your time and the chance to contribute. ■

