

Commentary

Critical Issues Facing the Thermal Spray Industry: Enhanced Corporate Visibility/Enhanced Value Proposition Through New Products and Services/ Increase Membership in New and Existing Segments



The March 2009 issue of JTST outlined the need for global alliances and outreach, and discussed the following critical questions: (1) How do you increase outreach to promote technology outside the industry, and (2) How do you increase global exposure through alliances and offerings. The December 2008 issue addressed the issue, “How do we engage

management of industry, government, and academia to allow staff to support professional societies such as TSS on a voluntary basis”. This installment will address the final three strategic questions facing TSS (Fig. 1). These areas are:

1. Enhanced Corporate Visibility and Value
2. Enhanced Value Proposition Through New Products and Services
3. Increased Membership in Existing and New Segments

Enhanced Corporate Visibility and Value

1. **Industrial Advisory Council (IAC):** The IAC has been formed to help advise the TSS Executive Board on the strategic direction of the society. This council is composed of high level management from key areas of industry. Today, there are members from the United States, Europe and Asia. Members are from all levels of the supply chain such as powder/equipment suppliers, and applicators and end users from aerospace and automotive sectors. Key IAC discussions center on ways professional societies can improve market growth through improved/alternative programming. Other critical topics to be discussed with IAC members are: operator certification, Environmental—Health and Safety (EH&S), and market outreach. The IAC meets once a year, and is a valuable tool for obtaining feedback.

2. *Committee Initiatives*

- a. **Certification:** The end of 2008 saw the formation of the TSS Certification Committee under the direction of Mr. Luc Pouliot. One major benefit for the TSS industry will be the standardization of expectations for thermal spray operators being hired. Operators would have a specific level of competence based on their level of testing. The initial goal of the Certification Committee is to reconfirm the market need for certification, and to determine if there is one market segment more interested than any other.
- b. **Environmental, Health & Safety Issues: Guidelines for the Use of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) in Thermal Spraying** was developed by the Safety Committee and added to the TSS website in 2008 under the leadership of Mr. Greg Wuest. Other documents on the website include (1) Safety Guidelines for Performing Risk Assessment, (2) OSHA Final Standard on Hexavalent Chromium, (3) Safety Guidelines for Handling and Use of Gases in Thermal Spraying, and (4) Thermal Spray Booth Design Guidelines. The value of employee safety to corporations and its employees cannot be underestimated. Better awareness of the safety issues related to the thermal spray industry may also result in the development of new markets and applications.
- c. **Programming:** New and original programming is a very critical topic for the TSS. The Programming Committee, under the leadership of Mr. Charlie Kay of ASM, is constantly looking for new opportunities to create new technical programs that can reach out to new customers and markets. We are also looking into new strategic partnerships with other professional and trade associations to improve our visibility, and conferences that are not primarily thermal spray, but may require thermal spray technology for application success. TSS volunteers and ASM are also well aware of the importance of networking, and have developed

schedules to allow for organizations to talk to each other one-on-one at these conferences.

- d. **Website:** The goal of the Web Sub-Committee under the leadership of Dr. Robert Gansert is to redesign the TSS website so that it is more customer friendly and addresses the needs of its members. This new and improved website should result in quicker access to important information. The Membership, Markets and Outreach (MM&O) Committee, chaired by Ms. Ann Bolvalage, is working with the other TSS Committees to develop a membership value proposition package that is clearly visible by industry and its members. The key value to industry will be reduced time to obtain critical information.
- e. **Awards:** The Awards Committee, under the leadership of Prof. Jockel Heberlein, is reviewing the possibility of creating a corporate award that recognizes organizations that support the initiatives of professional societies such as TSS. An award such as this would be new to TSS since all past awards have been based on an individual's effort.

Enhanced Value Proposition Through New Products and Services

The previous JTST article reviewed the existing products and services TSS offers its community. Many of these products need to be packaged and promoted better through our website and the iTSSe newsletter, and communicated better with our UNTS partners. We also have to aggressively develop new products that support the professional growth of individuals and the needs of industry, government and academia (high school, college and graduate level). New products and services that the TSS community is working on include updated and new training classes to meet the needs of TSS, a web-based application case-study library, new concepts in event programming, the re-engineering of the TSS newsletter called ITSS, to a more application market-focused newsletter, and the continued improvement of JTST as the number one international journal on thermal spray. Environmental, health and safety activities are ongoing and of critical importance to our industry. Information transfer is so important that ASM, the TSS Board, and Safety Committee have all agreed to allow this information to be available for all.

Increased Membership in Existing and New Segments

According to an ASM member satisfaction survey, the most important deliverables today were ranked as follows:

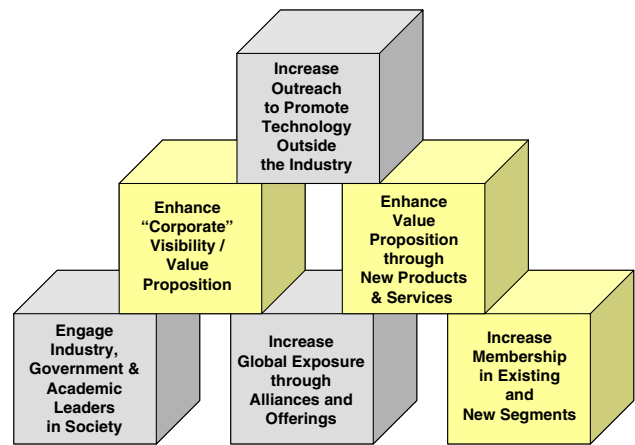


Fig. 1 Critical factors facing TSS (The three lighter colored boxes identify topics discussed in this edition.)

- (1) continuing education—members want to learn and stay current in their professional field;
- (2) networking opportunities;
- (3) the ability to access the internet and electronic information, and
- (4) enhancement of a member's career.

Based on this information, TSS needs to continue to grow and improve on education and training. The ability to create a web-based learning series and allow for users to be able to have friendly, easy access to the web will be more important than ever in the years ahead. Products and services need to be made available and retrievable in a simple manner.

Products and services not only have to be made available in an easy fashion, but they must have value. Membership value to one segment may not be value to another. It is important that the TSS understands this and addresses these issues before committing to any one project.

We need to have an improved rewards/recognition program for members that contribute to the benefit of the industry. More often than not, the efforts of volunteers go unnoticed by their peers and/or organizations. This needs to be changed if we are to grow the volunteer base.

Finally, we need to clearly inform our TSS members what general thermal spray information is open to the public, what is limited to those with ASM membership, and what is premium information available only to those with TSS membership. New members will come when the value to the community is obvious and transparent.

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