

## Q&A /// INTERVIEW WITH AN INDUSTRY INSIDER



VERONICA BECKER /// EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR /// ASM INTERNATIONAL

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### **You were recently named the new executive director of ASM International. What are your responsibilities?**

In a nutshell, the responsibilities are to lead the organization in the achievement of the most critical priorities. One is increased membership and membership engagement, including early and mid-career professionals, which, as we know, is an issue for a lot of associations trying to engage a younger set of professionals. They also want to expand internationally a little bit more and do more collaboration.

I want to increase focus on materials-related technologies and the application and dissemination of the information related to those technologies. In this space, they're looking for emerging things. They want to stay current. What do we have on AI? Or in additive manufacturing, which is fairly new, right? And do we have textbooks? Do we have classes and courses and database information? We're working to continually remain relevant. And we want healthy financial results.

### **What about working at ASM International excites you the most?**

I, personally, am very passionate about ASM. I was here long enough to have had it grafted onto my DNA. There is so much passion and commitment here across the board, through all of the volunteers and the employees. The information that we're providing and the mission is good for the world.

I'm a mission-driven person, which I didn't know until I worked at ASM. It matters that what you're doing matters to somebody. It's not just trying to create 5 cents more on the stock market or trying to get a dividend. Those are all missions of corporate organizations. The mission here is much more for the good of the world, the good of the community, and the good of people. That makes a big difference.

I'm very excited about the volunteers and the dedication from the boards and committees, all the way through chapters and smaller communities. And I'm excited about the specialized topical communities like heat treat and metallography and thermal spray. I am excited about the dedicated employees. We've got people who've been here their entire careers. That dedication you don't find everywhere.

### **Since you worked with ASM International before, how did that experience – plus being away for a time – help with how you are approaching your new position now?**

Having worked with the ASM Board, the Finance and Investment Committees, and the executive directors in the past, and having learned from all of my predecessors, I saw a lot of different things that worked and things that didn't work. I learned a great deal from that.

And I also learned a great deal from all of my other experience in New York and my management experience everywhere else. During my break, I did some consulting. It gave me time to reflect on a lot of the things that had happened at ASM and what I would've done differ-

ently. So I had this deep understanding of the organization. It helped me approach the position effectively and quickly address concerns. I came in with a plan.

### **What do you consider ASM International's philosophy when it comes to promoting materials-centric engineers and scientists?**

The focus is on gathering and disseminating information, specifically to the materials arena through subject matter experts to subject matter experts. There's a lot of importance put on reaching that audience in a way that's effective. It's a constant evolution. We have to constantly look at things. And we have to constantly say, "Is this the best way to do this? Is this the right approach?"

The philosophy is to not become archaic and to continue to value our subject matter experts and their contribution. There's a lot we could learn from our affiliates, honestly, that the overarching organization may not be doing as well as they are.

### **Since our readership consists largely of industrial heat treaters, how can ASM International help in advancing this sector?**

I want to go in and meet with heat treaters. I've actually had fairly good relationship with them in the past. They're an incredibly valuable subject matter subset. They are doing a lot of really interesting things, and I want to help them. I want to see what we can do, how we can collaborate. Heat treaters are such a significant and important part of what we present to the world.

### **What are your short- and long-term goals as executive director?**

The first year we need to really focus on our core and enhance and grow our effectiveness in our offerings to the materials community.

ASM got lost in the weeds a little bit trying to develop 100 things just because one or two people thought it would be cool. But we weren't successful at doing it, and some of the residual echoes of casting the net that wide are still in our space.

What we realized we need to do was rein it back in and focus on the things that we do well, which is delivering high-quality education, engaging events, valuable journals, and technical information, and make sure that is as strong as it can possibly be.

We're also focusing on serving the members in the ways it matters most to them and increase our collaboration. We want to stabilize and focus on our core strengths, and then we're going to look at growth in the core spaces. We're actually very good at our events, and if there's an organization struggling, then maybe there can be a collaborative effort where we could be the event resource for them. ♣

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