

Q&A /// INTERVIEW WITH AN INDUSTRY INSIDER



DR. LESLEY FRAME /// 2026-2028 PRESIDENT /// IFHTSE

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How long have you been involved with IFHTSE (International Federation for Heat Treatment and Surface Engineering) and how did you get involved?

I've been on the board two years already. I was on the board as part of the executive committee as a vice president and now president, and then I'll be past president after my two-year term. I've helped out with various events in the past, including serving as co-chair for the Thermal Processing in Motion conference in Spartanburg, South Carolina, in 2018.

What do you hope to accomplish as president?

There are opportunities for us to pull in new members. We have a very strong European contingent. We have a very strong East Asian contingent, and we have, I'd say a moderately strong North America contingent. Each of these areas is active in both the conference planning and in terms of the leadership participation in IFHTSE. What I'm hoping for is that we get representation from some of the other countries around the world where there's a very strong heat treating and surface engineering presence not yet connected to IFHTSE. This would be, for example, building our connections to researchers, professional societies, and companies in India, and also pulling in collaborations from some of the organizations in Canada and also from South America.

Being able to broaden our global network is one of the goals. Now, of course, since I'm only president for two years, doing all of that in two years won't be possible. My goal is to leverage what we already have and incrementally expand and build IFHTSE to be an even greater resource for the heat-treat community.

What challenges do the heat-treating and surface engineering industry face in the next two years and beyond?

I'm an associate professor in material science engineering. I spent some time in industry, and I like to collaborate with industry on real-world problems, but my perspective is highly academic at this point, meaning I see the challenges from the teaching and the research perspective. What I see as one of the challenges is workforce development — one of the key things that I think has been a challenge for decades.

I've spent a lot of time with the heat-treating society within ASM, and one of the conversations that always comes up during board meetings is: How do we pull in students? How do we pull in young professionals? How do we get people attracted to heat treating? That is always a challenge, and it requires constant effort to keep meeting that challenge. It's not a problem that we solve once, and we're done. It's a perennial issue. Some of the things that we can do as an organization is help support students and these early career profes-

sionals to attend the conferences, to become involved in different aspects of leadership — of the professional societies that are part of IFHTSE — to give them opportunities to network and learn who the key players are, and to learn how they can get involved with solving big scale industry problems.

IFHTSE does a number of things to help promote that, and maintaining and even building on that would be great over the next couple of years. Some of the things we already do well include having speaking awards and poster awards and travel grants for students. We try to encourage students and young professionals to attend the conferences by offsetting the financial burden for them to attend. We also try to promote their research efforts at the conferences, drawing attention to what it is they're doing. It helps ignite conversations among the students and the industry professionals.

That's on a global scale with the young professionals?

Yes. We have our conferences around the world, and we'll have travel grants for students to go to conferences in China or in Cologne for our World Congress next year. These opportunities are promoted through IFHTSE.

Do you want to expand on how IFHTSE is bringing in other countries?

It is not just a matter of saying: “Do you want to join? Good. You've joined.” Being part of this federation is a little bit different than being part of a professional society. The IFHTSE is a collection of societies, and the ways we can involve other countries is to first identify what professional societies or companies or academic institutions could be members, and then determine the value proposition for them to gain membership within IFHTSE. In other words, making sure it's clear to them that, when they're paying dues to IFHTSE, they know what they are getting out of it, and how we can make sure it's a two-way collaboration. That takes more dialogue and relationship building, which is part of the work that we've already begun.

What can members expect from this year's World Congress?

Every year, the World Congress is designed to have in-depth technical presentations, symposia, and panel discussions, and, in some cases, workshops that pull together industry professionals with academics so we can learn from each other and help address or discuss and identify the big heat-treat and surface-engineering challenges. The final program isn't released yet, but every year our World Congress program is packed with these technical presentations. 🌱

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