

DASMA'S "TECHNICAL VOICE" TRANSFORMED THE INDUSTRY

HETZEL'S LEGACY DEMONSTRATES
THE POWER OF COLLABORATION

By Vicki Jones, Editor

Editor's Note: Joe Hetzel made a name for himself and more importantly, the industry, as the first full-time DASMA technical director. As he embarks on his retirement, we reflect on his incredible influence, and highlight how the power of this position will continue to advance our technical reputation in the industry.

Twenty-four years ago, DASMA recognized that the gate, door, and access industry needed to be represented on regulatory and technical issues. Existing issues, such as UL 325, energy, wind ratings, and more required ongoing monitoring, and new issues needed to be addressed.

According to DASMA executive director John Addington, "Up until that point, the industry was only reacting to code issues and the resulting consequences. We decided that having a technical director would let us develop and influence change.

"At that time, there was so much going on and various code cycles and trends were directly affecting our businesses. DASMA determined that the industry needed one united voice to present our issues to the code and regulatory groups," said Addington.

The group began by outlining the goals and expectations for this position, and immediately realized that they could not successfully achieve these objectives through DASMA membership alone.

Many companies did not have the time, and it just wasn't practical to duplicate their efforts and resources by researching the same code-related issues. "Having one person gather a consensus view from DASMA, present it to the code groups, and represent the industry on technical issues was the solution," said Addington.

Finding the right person

First, DASMA had to find a way to fund the position, and then they had to convince the remaining members the position was needed. That was the easy part, since there were several pressing industry issues at the time.

The hard part was finding the right person. He or she would need to have an engineering and technical background, code experience, the presence to represent the industry to the code and regulatory groups, and the personality to establish the industry as a credible source.

DASMA placed ads, interviewed multiple candidates, and found one person who "checked off all the boxes." In August 1996, Joe Hetzel was hired as the first full-time technical director of the industry, and the rest, as they say, is history.

The perfect foundation

Hetzel was exposed to the industry at a very young age. His late father, Robert Hetzel, had worked for Telectron, a maker of operators and controls for garage doors and gates. Robert would bring Joe with him to the manufacturing facility, and there, Joe first learned how garage door operators worked.

"My family was also the first house on our street to have an operator on our garage door. This exposed me to a machine that most

people probably didn't even know existed," said Hetzel.

Robert then took a job at an aviation electronics company in Cleveland, where he worked for many years. Joe followed in his father's footsteps and began working in the "shop" of the same company.

At 17, Joe was the youngest employee in the company's history at that time. He was responsible for handling quality control inspections, material control accounting, printing circuit board testing, and other various duties. Joe continued working there throughout his high school and college years.

"Those years working in a factory setting gave me a unique opportunity to develop a strong work ethic," he said.

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Cleveland State University, Hetzel worked in the environmental engineering field, where he discovered an interest in building products. This led him to a position at an architectural detailing and design company, where he worked as a professional engineer.

In 1987, Hetzel began working at Patio Enclosures where, for nine years, he acquired experience in code development, standards writing, computer programming, and research and development.

The road untraveled

Yes, Hetzel had the engineering background to navigate the code and technical requirements of DASMA's technical director, but to succeed in an entirely new position, even with his previous experience, would be no easy feat.

Hetzel said, "The hardest part about being the first technical director is that there were no precedents. There was no one to train me on the duties of the position. There were no procedures to follow. I literally had to start from scratch."

Initially, Hetzel spent most of his time communicating with DASMA members, trying to determine what they needed from him. "I had to brainstorm with them to figure out how to address their needs before I could do anything," Hetzel said.

Representing the industry

From the beginning, Hetzel was expected to represent the industry on technical issues. The job required him to consider and propose code changes for industry products and present recommendations on behalf of all the door and access divisions. While this may seem like a heavy load for some, Hetzel took the responsibility in stride.

"It was not difficult at all for DASMA to be taken seriously by others and included in future code development. I had to be fully prepared for each meeting. This often required me to outline specific proposals and

Tackling UL 325 and ASTM F2200

During his first few years, revising UL 325 and creating the ASTM F2200 standard were top priorities. Consequently, automated vehicular gate systems activities dominated most of Hetzel's time and effort.

"The biggest challenge of that time was adapting to the business-related and technological changes that were dawning. These issues dominated my workload the first few years and continue to be a priority," said Hetzel.

Rick Sedivy, the current treasurer of DASMA and one of the DASMA members who worked with Hetzel throughout all of his years as technical director said, "Hiring Joe at that particular time was absolutely essential to the success of the organization."

Once UL 325 was substantially updated in 2000 and ASTM F2200 was first published in 2002, DASMA recognized that these new standards needed to be reflected in model building codes. This became one of Joe's primary objectives.

"We knew that automated vehicular gate system safety was important and that it directly affected our industry. We were also aware that builders and consumers knew nothing about it," said Sedivy. "We had to get the message out."

According to Sedivy, this is one of Hetzel's greatest achievements. "It took 10 years and required a ton of effort building relationships, establishing credibility as a reputable technical source, and presenting in front of code bodies, but Joe got it done."

Hetzel said, "Before I presented, I knew I needed at least one member of a voting committee on my side. It's one thing to present a code change proposal, but if

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to present precise reasoning for each.

"I also had to be prepared to listen to people's comments, criticisms, and suggestions, using them constructively to bring back proposals as needed," Hetzel said.

He made it look easy, but to be effective required a great deal of work by an assured, personable individual. Hetzel was able to network and establish himself as a credible source and to develop relationships within the code and regulatory bodies.

This was a fundamental part of getting recommendations approved and establishing DASMA as a credible resource.



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you don't have anyone in that realm to help champion your cause, it may never get approved."

Developing code presence

Hetzel traveled all over the country representing every division and presenting their issues to code, standards, and regulatory groups. Hetzel said that outside of DASMA, he had to make sure to accurately communicate the issues of the members to maintain their trust.



One of Hetzel's primary responsibilities was presenting regularly in front of code bodies and regulatory committees.

"It is extremely important that the language and content in codes, standards, and DASMA documents accurately reflects the industry. This enhances the ability of members to better function in the marketplace," said Hetzel.

This was one of Hetzel's most notable achievements, according to Barbara Kelkhoff, regulatory engineering manager for LiftMaster.

"Joe was able to learn the standards and codes and then determine how they should be adapted to best represent the industry. For years, he did the lion's share of the work, dissecting codes and proposing and making changes," Kelkhoff said.

She called him "the master of building codes." The code changes that Hetzel proposed pertaining to commercial door and gate products were particularly important.

"Previously, these two areas didn't have any type of regulations, except for OSHA guidelines and minimal legislation in some states," said Kelkhoff. "Now, the content has changed from a mostly voluntarily requirement to an enforceable one.

"He heightened the importance of complying with safety standards and helped

establish guidelines to regulate products within our industry," she said.

Initially, Hetzel had to lobby for his recommendations to even be considered by many committees and code bodies. Today, those same groups contact the respected DASMA technical director for consultation. This is a testament to the credibility and esteem DASMA has earned within our own and affiliated industries.

The humble voice

Hetzel's experience representing 100 manufacturer companies and working with the various DASMA product divisions, including commercial and residential garage doors, door and gate operators, rolling doors, and high-performance doors, makes him a "jack of all trades," said Sedivy.

"He is the technical voice of the industry because he is involved in every part of the industry in a very broad capacity, and he is an expert in all of these areas," added Sedivy.

"DASMA represents 95% of the North American market, and Joe was the voice that spoke for that entire community. We will continue to influence change and represent the industry through the technical position that Joe has worked to establish," Addington said.

Presenting at trade shows for the past 20 years has also helped solidify Hetzel's reputation as the leading technical voice of the industry. These events were a great platform for him in which to share his technical knowledge and increase his visibility.

Paul McManus, Haas Door vice president of sales and business development and IDA board member said, "For years, Hetzel has been the voice for technical issues such as UL 325, thermal performance, safety standards, fire resistance, wind-load and impact resistance, and dozens of others. This has trickled down to the component part of the business, too."

Through the years, Hetzel said that he relied on the technical expertise of the members. "They successfully educated me



Hetzel spent many years as a baseball coach, including a stint at his local high school, and he was an amateur baseball player.

about the topics and causes that matter, and they were always readily available to navigate any circumstances or situations that arose along the way. So, in essence, we are all one collective 'technical voice' of the industry."

The TDS mastermind

Hetzel can also be credited for the creation of the Technical Data Sheet (TDS). The concept was inspired by an idea from Addington in the late 1990s, when the two determined that there was a need for industry guidelines, best practices, and code/standard interpretations that various parties could use to help clarify industry technical issues.

The original TDSs were based on previously published DASMA bulletins. As new technical issues arose, additional documents were developed and written by Hetzel.

Today, there are over 130 TDSs accessible at www.dasma.com. These are periodically updated, and new documents are being drafted and published regularly. TDSs have proven to be extremely valuable resources for the industry and represent another important example of Hetzel's legacy.

DASMA legal counsel Naomi Angel said that she was always impressed by Hetzel's writing ability. "Engineers with his level of technical knowledge are not always good at writing. Joe was able to interpret technical data and create written reference documents that we all can understand."



Hetzel (far right) performing on guitar with the Dogwood Rockers at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame 2016.

Not your average Joe

To some, Hetzel may appear to be all business. But he is also an accomplished musician who plays electric, acoustic, and bass guitar, drums, piano, and keyboard with his church group. He also gigs regularly with "The Dogwood Rockers" band featuring a classic rock/country/folk sound and some original songs written by Hetzel.

"I plan to continue participating with these music groups," said Hetzel. "I also hope to

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A few fortunate DASMA members were able to witness Hetzel's amazing piano-playing skills at the 2019 Annual Meeting in Sarasota, Fla.

Saying goodbye

Hetzel's father was never able to enjoy any type of retirement. "This had a big influence on my decision to retire. I was only 36 when he died, and immediately after, I began planning for my (relatively) early retirement."

Making time to spend with his five grandchildren, five children and their spouses, and his wife of 38 years, Mary Anne, was another factor contributing to Hetzel's decision.

He said that he will miss interacting with people within the groups, particularly the DASMA chairs and codes and standards members. He will also miss seeing DASMA documents completed, getting code proposals approved, and the sense of accomplishment he gained from working with the members.

Members of the industry will miss Hetzel's enthusiasm and passion for the work, his

attention to detail, his reliable, humble nature, and his undeniable technical expertise.

DASMA may have had the vision to create the technical director position, but it is Hetzel who should be credited for establishing the industry's technical reputation. The influence of his "voice" will be heard long after he retires. ■



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assemble all the songs that I have written and recorded over the years into an "anthology," and fulfill my dream of recording a couple of original songs at a professional recording studio."

The legacy continues

The original vision for the technical director position had been loosely defined. Hetzel's modest inclination is to downplay his role, but the evolution of the position and its influence are undeniable.

He said that by applying many timeless business principles, including the importance of embracing association management, he was able to fulfill the requirements and expectations of the position.

"I am grateful that DASMA recognized the need for a technical director position in the marketplace," said Hetzel. "My father passed away before I started at DASMA, but I know he would be amazed by the direction my career went and proud of what this position has become."

Hetzel has been recognized with several awards during his career, including the IDA Presidential Award last spring and the IDA Distinguished Service Award in 2014. He said, "I am extremely grateful to be acknowledged by these awards because one seems to represent what you've done, and the other, who you've been. I appreciate both equally."

The good news for Hetzel's successor, Gordon Thomas, is that he will have someone with "institutional knowledge" to contact in times of need.

Throughout 2021, Hetzel will consult with Thomas on various emerging topics as well as the startups of new code and standard development cycles. The biggest challenge for Thomas will be gaining the trust of the members and of course, following in Hetzel's footsteps.

Reflections from DASMA members

Ray Neisewander III, former DASMA president, president & CEO, Raynor

"One of the best decisions the DASMA board of directors ever made was to create the position of technical director and hire Joe to fill it. He has been instrumental in putting DASMA on the map with government regulators and code enforcement agencies, and has helped us achieve our national reputation as an authoritative voice in the industry."

Barbara Kelkhoff, regulatory engineering manager, LiftMaster

"One of the things that I most appreciate about Joe is his ability to tackle and own a To Do List. I've worked with him for over 20 years, and during that time, he's never missed a deadline or left a task undone. Having such a reliable and organized person overseeing the industry has been a huge support to us all."

Naomi Angel, DASMA legal counsel

"The reputation that DASMA and the industry has today is in large part because of Joe Hetzel. His dedication, detail, follow-through, integrity, diplomacy, and technical expertise helped establish the respected standing that the industry now benefits from, in every way."

Steve Hahn, product manager, Lawrence Roll-up Doors

"It has been my pleasure to know Joe Hetzel both professionally and personally for many years. During that time, I have witnessed DASMA become an increasingly well recognized and respected organization. I believe this is largely due to Joe's tireless involvement and the professional manner in which he represents our industry."

"As a former technical chair for ARDI—which was only a small fraction of Joe's role—I truly appreciate his accomplishments and recognize the effort required."

John Addington, executive director, Thomas Associates

Joe's strength is that he was able to build a reputation as a knowledgeable engineer with credibility and integrity. He quickly gained the trust of the members, and they relied on his sound, unbiased recommendations. And he did it all without any blueprint."