



Interview with NFDA President Melissa Patel



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Q1.

Congratulations on your election as the new president. Could you start by sharing what changes you hope to bring to NFDA after assuming this new role? What are your core mission and vision?

A. Thank you! It is a great privilege to serve our association. My vision is for NFDA to be the first place our members turn when navigating industry changes, whether that's supply chain disruption, emerging technology, workforce development, or market uncertainty. We want every member to leave an NFDA event with new ideas, stronger relationships, and practical tools they can immediately apply to their business.

We have started our Ambassador Program this year, which puts an emphasis on ensuring all new attendees have a friendly face in the crowd as they are integrated into our association. We have received very positive feedback thus far and hope that continues to encourage other distributors to join.

Q2.

During your term, is there any important plan you would like to lead the

NFDA team to do first?

A. Our priority isn't simply growing membership—it's increasing the value of membership. When companies experience meaningful education, valuable peer relationships, and actionable industry insights, membership growth becomes a natural outcome.

Q3.

How do you view the major challenges currently facing the U.S. fastener industry? Which issues deserve the industry's most attention?

A. The U.S. fastener industry is navigating a period of significant change. **Tariffs, geopolitical uncertainty, labor shortages, inflation, and evolving customer expectations all require companies to become more agile than ever before.** At the same time, customers continue to expect shorter lead times, higher service levels, and competitive pricing.

I believe **one of our greatest opportunities is sharing knowledge across the industry.** No company has every answer, but together we can learn from one another and respond more effectively. That's one of the greatest values NFDA provides—bringing leaders together to exchange ideas and prepare for whatever comes next.

Q4.

Aside from these challenges, where do you see the greatest growth opportunities for the U.S. fastener market in the coming years? Why?

A. I believe organizations that move beyond simply selling products and instead become strategic supply chain partners will experience the greatest growth. **Customers increasingly value inventory management, technical expertise, engineering support, automation, and data-driven decision-making.** Companies that invest in these capabilities will continue to differentiate themselves.



Q5.

Global supply chains have been undergoing continuous restructuring in recent years. How do you think these changes will affect the U.S. fastener industry ecosystem? How can NFDA help its members adapt to the new supply chain landscape?

A. Global supply chains will continue to evolve, but trusted partnerships remain essential. Companies are building more resilient strategies by diversifying supply while continuing to invest in long-term supplier relationships. The environment within NFDA, particularly with our Executive Sales Planning Sessions (ESPS), which we hold annually, is a great way to make those connections and discuss future alignments.

Q6.

Taiwan has long been an important supplier of fasteners to the U.S., and the two sides have enjoyed a mutually beneficial and symbiotic relationship. How do you view the long-term cooperative relationship between the U.S. and Taiwan's fastener industries? What opportunities for cooperation can we look forward to in the future?

A. You are absolutely correct! Taiwan is a major supplier partner to our industry, and I anticipate that will be ongoing. There are many long-lasting friendships that have been developed over the years. **One area we are focusing on is the ability to react much more quickly to demand shifts.** Taiwan manufacturers have consistently demonstrated innovation and responsiveness. As customer expectations evolve, **continued collaboration around lead-time reduction, inventory strategies, and supply chain flexibility will strengthen the competitiveness of both our industries.**

Q7.

What new capabilities do you think the U.S. fastener industry will need in the future to maintain its global competitiveness?

A. Artificial intelligence will undoubtedly become an increasingly valuable tool across our industry, from demand forecasting and production planning to logistics optimization and part identification. However, technology alone isn't enough. **Companies that combine AI with knowledgeable people, strong customer relationships, and continuous learning will be best positioned for long-term success.**

Q8.

What major events or new initiatives will NFDA be organizing this year? What specific value does NFDA hope to provide to its members?

A. Thank you for asking about what is coming up. **Our next in-person event is our Executive Summit October 28-30 in Palm Desert, California.** I am really looking forward to the event content, which will include high-level discussions on AI along with an applicable workshop to encourage collaboration and engagement with our attendees. The event will conclude with an inspiring keynote focused on developing a championship mindset—an important reminder that culture and leadership remain competitive advantages in every organization. All the events are encompassed with a lot of networking, which is truly the power of the association.

More to be found here: <https://nfda.memberclicks.net/2026-executive-summit-program>

Q9.

The fastener industry in many countries is facing the challenge of generational transition. In terms of attracting the younger generation and professional talent to the fastener industry, what steps do you think companies and associations can take?

A. One of our greatest opportunities is helping young professionals see that the fastener industry offers meaningful and rewarding careers. I joined Field as an 18-year-old college student and never imagined the opportunities that lay ahead. I certainly never imagined that one day I would serve as President of NFDA. That journey was only possible because leaders both at Field and in our industry invested in my development, challenged me, and believed in me.

We need to **continue creating those same opportunities for the next generation through mentorship, professional development, internships, and leadership programs.** When people understand the innovation, relationships, and career growth our industry offers, they quickly recognize this is an exciting industry to be in.

Q10.

Finally, what message would you like to convey to NFDA's members and global partners, including those in Taiwan? What are your hopes for the future development of the fastener industry in the U.S. and around the world?

A. My message is one of gratitude and optimism. The fastener industry has always been built on relationships, trust, and collaboration. While markets and technologies will continue to evolve, those values remain unchanged.

I look forward to strengthening the partnership among distributors, manufacturers, and suppliers worldwide, including our valued partners in Taiwan. Together we have an opportunity to continue advancing our industry through innovation and knowledge sharing.

I believe the future of our industry is very bright, and I am honored to play a small role in helping move it forward. ■

