

INTERVIEW WITH ASTM INTERNATIONAL'S NEW CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD - TACO VAN DER MATEN

As an organisation, ASTM International touches modern life in many ways. ASTM International standards and methods are used in most vertical markets with over 35,000 members volunteering time and energy into method development and sustainability.



ASTM International plays a major role within the Petroleum Industry and ASTM's D02 committee focuses on methods and specifications used within the petroleum related markets. Notably with over 2,500 members, the D02 group, has the largest membership within the ASTM organisation.

The ASTM D02 committee meet every June and December to discuss new methods as well as validating existing standards and methods.

As ASTM "D" methods are frequently referenced in the editorial and advertising content within Petro Industry News, PIN regularly attends these important meetings to help inform readers of the latest methods available which will help them with productivity, performance and regulatory compliance.

We generously thank the 2019 chairman of ASTM, Taco Van Der Maten, for taking the time to answer our questions.

Petro Industry News (PIN) - Hi Taco, congratulations on your election! When did you first become involved with ASTM and what can you tell us about your journey so far?

Taco van der Maten (TM) - I joined ASTM in 2006, when starting to work at PANalytical to investigate how we could help our customers to test to compliance with the then-new Regulation of Hazardous Substances (RoHS). ASTM had just formed a new committee on regulated substances (called F40), which is at the forefront of developing standard test methods, so it made good sense to join ASTM International. Right from the start I saw how relevant ASTM is. I met customers, regulators, competitors, and members of other Standards Developments Organizations like IEC and ISO, all in one place. From there on, I served as task-group leader for a new test method (called F2617) and then became vice-chairman and later chairman of the committee. Seven years ago, the president of ASTM International asked if I would join the ASTM International Board of Directors. I did, and I served on the executive committee 3 years later. It was a great honour to be elected as Chairman of the Board of Directors for 2019 and serve and represent so many members. Being myself a member of committee D02 makes it even more special because, D02 being the largest committee, it is an important area of focus in board discussions.

PIN - What qualifications do you need to first become an ASTM member and then an ASTM Chair?

TM -It helps if you have a passion for people and technology, but basically anyone who wants to make a difference can become a member: students, owners of one-person-companies, employees of large multinationals, government employees and retirees. As ASTM's process is based on consensus way of decision making,

ideas from everyone are taken seriously, challenged, and when found valid, incorporated into the official documents like standard test methods. This offers a great opportunity for personal development, as you must work with often conflicting interests, strong opinions, and many different cultures. Being able to achieve results in such an environment is one of the biggest personal developments for me.

As a chair, additional dimensions must be considered. One of my predecessors described it as a mini-MBA. Finance, long-term directions and the bigger picture for the good of all the members and stakeholders need to be considered. Luckily, ASTM has such a great staff under President Kathie Morgan's leadership, that we as a board are very well prepared and can really focus on things that matter.

Two points of focus for my year as chair are international relevance of ASTM International and the on-boarding of emerging professionals. Both focal points align nicely. First, wherever I go, all Standards Development Organisations realize that the world needs global cooperation as trade is global. ASTM is one of the clear leaders in creating globally-relevant standards. Secondly, the next generation has so much to offer for the challenges we are currently facing. We need to help them become as effective as possible in their work. Relating to that, ASTM has launched the Emerging Professionals program, where we bring the next generation of leaders into meetings at ASTM 's expense to learn how to develop standards and be a good leader. We have almost 100 emerging professionals who have completed the program, and we can happily now already mention that almost half of these have already moved to leadership positions on subcommittees. That is a great achievement I would say!

PIN - How much of a commitment is there in being an ASTM member?

TM - That's totally up to the individual! Many members, from all industries will testify that ASTM membership has helped with their career and that it's as much commitment as you are comfortable with.

ASTM offers many possibilities to participate, from committee-weeks for in-person interactions to teleconferencing, remote web connections, and alert-services. All these tools and options make it very flexible to participate effectively in ASTM processes. Although I must say, nothing beats a live committee meeting, because it is all about people. However, all the other options make it very easy to contribute at any time, any place and anywhere.

When I ask members what they see as the benefits of ASTM, they often describe a bigger picture of how the ASTM community has helped them advance their career. That context puts the commitment to ASTM in perspective, because the value of membership is so great.

PIN - Do you need to be an ASTM member to play a part in method development?

TM - Even though the cost for membership is low at \$75 USD, ASTM's technical meetings are also open to non-members to participate in the discussions.

In addition, there are also other ways you can be involved. A nice example of this is the Interlaboratory Study (ILS) program. A non-member working in a laboratory can participate in such a study to help create or refine the precision statement of an ASTM test method.

That said, participating in an ILS as an ASTM member gives the participant more control over the outcome of the test method itself. In other words, membership on the appropriate committee gives the participant the right to vote on the actual changes to the test method.

Whether or not you participate as a member, your involvement will positively impact your professional development and improve your understanding of the test methods being studied. ASTM encourages all participants to interact with members outside of their normal working environment, ultimately leading to more insightful and well thought out test methods for everyone's benefit.

PIN - How else does ASTM support those working within our industry?

TM - ASTM offers a very complete toolset for our members, and we as the board make sure considerable funds are allocated to support our members in the best way we can. The Compass and eLearning tools are two important products. As a user of Compass, myself, I always impress colleagues when I show them how easily they not only can find the relevant ASTM information but also annotate and share this information within our organization. This really speeds up our learning curve for new employees and captures our collective learning on the test methods for improved continuity of MalvernPanalytical.

eLearning adds nicely to this as it is a certified way of learning how to perform test methods and there are many eLearning trainings in the area of oils and fuels.

Further, our clients like that we, as MalvernPanalytical, participate in ASTM's Proficiency Testing Programs so we can demonstrate how good our instruments perform on the industry relevant samples. This gives confidence and trust.

ASTM International goes further and also initialises global outreach meetings to other Standards Development Organisations and industries so that members can interact globally with other stakeholders that matter in that specific area. An example is that the D02 committee leadership met in February 2019 with leaders of organization like, ACEA, ATIEL, CEC, ISO, BSI and EI. All these organizations deal in one way or another with ASTM International.

Of course, the ASTM team is amazing. For example, Alyson Fick is a great staff manager of D02. She and other staff make sure all members can contribute in the best way.

PIN - Petro Industry News regularly introduces new technologies to its readers, is this disruptive to existing methods?

TM - I'm glad you ask this question. ASTM prides itself to be relevant for industry and D02 is a great example of this point. As committees meet twice a year, new technologies are discussed in the committee meetings and when found applicable, new test methods are created and existing test methods are updated, if needed. Through ASTM's proven concept for test method revision and creation, with input possible of all 35,000 members, we can be sure the best brains we have contribute to stay relevant and include the disruptive technologies when deemed good for the industry its members.

PIN - Taco, clearly as Chairman you contribute a significant amount of time to ASTM activities and markets

beyond MalvernPanalytical's scope. Does this impact on your professional responsibilities?

TM - I am fortunate that MalvernPanalytical allows me to spend this time for my role as Chair. The impact is actually very positive for my day-time job, giving me a broad perspective on the global oils, petrochemical and polymer industries. In some respects, it allows me to 'see the future' because I meet so many interesting people who discuss things that are relevant for my job and for future developments in industries and countries around the world. As ASTM is so well connected internationally and has such a great staff that facilitates this, I can connect with many people on relevant topics, both in my role for ASTM international and MalvernPanalytical.

As a company we focus on 'customer intimacy' and my positions in ASTM over the years have enabled me to meet so many customers and stakeholders that help me to see what is really needed to 'help the world work better,' as ASTM's mission states. I think that all of our members experience this to some degree.

A nice example is additive manufacturing, where ASTM's new Centre of Excellence helps to connect to the relevant stakeholders while helping companies like Malvern Panalytical learn the right direction to focus on. That's also true for committees like D02, where companies can learn together how to improve sustainability in line with United Nations programs. Being able to connect to different stakeholders at the highest levels make sure that ASTM and MalvernPanalytical address the right topics.

PIN - Taco, thanks again for your time, we wish you and ASTM every success and invite PIN readers to consider ASTM membership and/or participation of inter laboratory studies.