



**SPECIALTY EQUIPMENT MARKET ASSOCIATION**

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE  
2019 ELECTION YEAR**

**MELANIE WHITE**

**Part 1 – Personal/Professional History**

1. Please provide a history of your professional background and education (including professional development). Feel free to attach your résumé and/or bio. Describe the specifics of your current job responsibilities:

Profile

Executive leadership for eight years, expert in customer, employee and supplier relationships. Loves setting strategic direction. Committed to continuous improvement. And loves the Automotive Aftermarket.

Experience

President, Hellwig Products Co. Inc. —2005—present

Had many positions within Hellwig Products. Started as an outside salesperson with cold calling, moving to marketing and sales manager where I learned to understand our customer needs. Marketing allowed me to grow awareness and learn to tell the story of Hellwig.

Manager, French Gourmet Bakery —2003—2005

Managed all aspects of a French Gourmet Bakery, restaurant and wholesale bread delivery divisions. Managed employees for the restaurant and the wholesale business, purchasing for both businesses as well. Grew my experience with employee management, creating a customer experience and managing our supply chain.

Manager, Baskin Robbins —1998—2003

Managed day to day operations of Baskin Robbins. Employee scheduling, setting up the daily till, and purchasing all products to keep the store running well. In this position I wore a lot of hats as a manager and also learned to decorate cakes to be able to fill another niche.

### Volunteer Positions

Chair, SEMA Cares —2018–Present

Responsible for setting and leading the strategic direction for the charities in the SEMA association. Responsibilities include, but aren't limited to, developing funding opportunities for our three charities, communication with the SEMA Board, and communication with charity leaders.

Chair, LTAA, Light Truck Accessory Alliance —2013–2015

Responsible for setting and leading the strategic direction for LTAA. Our goals during my leadership were growing awareness of LTAA- member benefits and growing the memberships. It's now one of the biggest councils in my association.

### Education

California State University Chico, Chico, California – Bachelors of Psychology degree with a minor in business skills; graduated with honors

Intense proactivity and aggressiveness in driving to reach goals. Strong leadership skills, great passion for developing teams, strong skills for identifying growth opportunities.

### Awards

SEMA Person of the Year 2018

SEMA Business Woman of the Year 2016

*SEMA News* 35 Under 35 2014

Fresno's 40 under 40 2012

### References

George Lathouris, Director of Sales, Warn Industries

Dan Kahn, President and founder of Kahn Media

Kathryn Reinhardt, Vice President of Marketing, Pilot Automotive

Rich Barsamian, Director of Sales for ACT

2. Indicate your historic and/or current involvement with automotive industry initiatives specifically, as well as other professional and philanthropic associations, societies and organizations you have been actively involved in. Please be specific about other boards (if any) on which you have served or are currently serving:

Current Chair of SEMA Cares

I am proud about the money we are raising; Pinewood brought in more money than it ever had before this last year. We also found more opportunities to raise money, including a new event—SEMA Cares Cars and Coffee. The first event was a true success for raising money and giving our car community an excuse to get together. The banquet text to donate was also a new option that allowed us to make a little more for our charities as well. One of the things that has been crucial for SEMA Cares is making sure it has the opportunity to transition every two years just as our committee leadership does. This has forced a lot more processes, written SOPs and better communication to make this happen. Succession is an important part of my leadership with SEMA Cares.

#### Past Chair of LTAA

I served on LTAA for four years before becoming chair of the committee. One of the things I am most proud of during that time is spearheading the change from the focus on the truck cap market and expanding it to include more of the overall member truck market companies. I did this by being careful and strategic with our committee member selections. I also led the development of the LTAA Media Preview day at the SEMA Show, and there was a lot of work that went into this. The truck market was requesting an event similar to MPMC's Media Trade Conference. With a lot of work with Peter MacGillivray, we delivered the LTAA Media Preview. Another thing that happened during my leadership of LTAA was that the select committee changed from myself being the only female to half the committee being female. This was not my focus—I am always looking for the most competent people, and it just happened that this allowed diversity on our committee.

#### Council Board Liaison

During my last year as chair of LTAA, I served as a council board liaison. I traveled and attended all the board meetings during that year. It was a huge time commitment attending the meetings and sitting in on calls with the councils and networks, but I learned so many valuable lessons that year. This is where my desire to serve the board started.

#### ETTN Select Committee Member

I served the Emerging Trends & Technology Network for two years. I am incredibly passionate about this subject. There is so much happening in vehicle technology that will dramatically affect our businesses. At Hellwig, we are watching this closely. We want to contribute to the efforts and be a part of the conversation that will help all of our businesses. I opted not to re-run to allow my director of operations the opportunity to run, as he was anxious to join this team.

#### SBN Active Member

There was a great opportunity for me to get involved with an SBN Mentor Program early in my career. Through this program I was connected with Anne Johnson. She was an amazing mentor and got me involved in LTAA. I remember attending my first long-range planning meeting and being so excited for the opportunity to contribute to my industry and make a difference. Anne truly is the reason I got so involved in volunteering.

#### San Joaquin Valley Manufacturing Alliance (SJVMA)

I am an active member of our SJVMA. This is a community that is working to develop talent for manufacturing positions in our area. Lack of talent in the valley for manufacturing jobs in the area is one of the challenges we face, so we are working together to try to solve this.

#### Other Volunteer Positions:

Exeter Little League Board

Rocky Hills Triathlon Board

President of Exeter Toastmaster

3. Please highlight specific career accomplishments including, but not limited to, patents received, product innovations, awards and recognitions, publications, marketing or business programs, presentation to business and/or industry symposiums. Share any and all significant or notable accomplishments:

#### SEMA Person of the Year 2018

I believe I became SEMA Person of the year because of my commitment and contributions to the industry. I work with integrity and have the best interest of our industry in mind for longevity. I have served many aspects of our industry and plan to continue to do so. I am passionate about this industry being healthy and thriving.

#### SEMA Business Woman of the Year Award 2016

I believe I was selected for this award because of what I'm doing for women in the industry. Not very many women hold executive leadership positions, especially in a male dominated industry. I believe I offer an example of how to do this well.

#### SEMA News 35 under 35 in 2014

I was selected for 35 Under 35 for what I had done with my career and the difference I was making in the industry. I was chair of LTAA at that point in my career and vice president of Hellwig Products.

#### Fresno's 40 under 40 in 2011

In 2011, I achieved class status for Fresno's local 40 under 40. This is a group of individuals making a difference in the Central Valley. At this point in my career, I was director of marketing and was growing the company.

#### Speaker at SEMA Show for ETTN in 2016

ETTN had a forum in 2016 to highlight technology and its effect on businesses. I spoke during the show and shared the last 70 years of Hellwig and explained what technology has done to our business and how important it has been for us to continue to support the research and use of technology.

#### Spokesperson Regarding Tariffs

Hellwig's largest purchase is steel, and with the announcement of tariffs on steel, it caused our steel prices to skyrocket. We buy American made steel but supply and demand caused it to increase significantly. I spoke out about this in a video, as well as attending the SEMA Washington Rally to get attention from lawmakers.

#### Vistage Member, CEO peer group

Currently I serve as a member of a local Vistage group. This has been a great asset and an incredible learning opportunity. Many opportunities and solutions are discovered in this group. We serve as board members to each other's companies.

#### Spokesperson for ESC Program

Hellwig participated in the ESC testing program early in its development. Because of our involvement, John Waraniak had me speak on behalf of the program in several different symposiums at the SEMA Show.

#### SEMA Show Founding Member

At the 50th anniversary of the SEMA Show, Hellwig was recognized on stage for being one of the members to exhibit at the first SEMA Show.

#### Craig School of Business Family Business Award

In 2018, I accepted the award for top 10 family businesses in the valley. We were awarded this because of commitment to our employees and our longevity in the valley.

#### Ford Design Award

At the 2017 SEMA Show, My team and I accepted the Ford Design award for our F-350 Build we called "The Operator."

#### SDC Platinum Member

We've achieved the highest level of recognition for our data.

4. Please mark each of the skill categories where you believe you possess a level of expertise:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Manufacturing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Motor Sports/Racing
<input type="checkbox"/>	Distribution/Logistics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Vehicle Shows/Auctions/Exhibitions
<input type="checkbox"/>	Supply Chain	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Financial Planning/Management
<input type="checkbox"/>	Engineering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Accounting
<input type="checkbox"/>	Vehicular/Product Design/Innovation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Human Resources Management
<input type="checkbox"/>	Product Management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Business Management/ Development
<input type="checkbox"/>	OEM Design/Technology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sales
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Brand Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	Business Technology
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Advertising	<input type="checkbox"/>	Data Management
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Marketing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Internet Utilization
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Strategic Planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify):
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public Relations	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Crisis Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Regulatory Compliance	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Legislative/Lobbying	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

**Part 2 – Personal/Professional Attributes**

5. What are your specific areas of expertise? What unique skills or perspective do you think you could bring to the leadership of SEMA? What business or life experience do you have that prepares you to help shape the direction of the industry? What industry issues are you particularly passionate about?

My expertise is in manufacturing knowledge. I am aware of the challenges of manufacturing in the United States, and of the challenges that affect manufacturers for the automotive industry. I have a strong background in marketing and sales, but I've also lived in steel-toe boots and have worked the factory line as well. I have a deep understanding of all aspects of manufacturing from sales, marketing, engineering, finance and operations.

I believe my unique skills are my connections in the industry. I feel I could help represent the small companies. I am a strategic thinker and am always thinking of opportunities to grow. I am strongly committed to continuous improvement and will challenge the status quo.

My business or life experience includes running a small company and almost tripling the business since joining the company. I've grown the company, the leadership team, the Hellwig team, culture and have implemented continuous improvement with Lean

Manufacturing principles. I have responsibility for the financial success for the company. I read and am responsible for the P&L for our company.

Before I joined Hellwig, I managed a French Gourmet Bakery. I was responsible for the success of that small company, I ran the day-to-day operations and helped grow its wholesale business. I understand the challenges of running a small company and the limited resources available.

I'm particularly passionate about vehicle technology and legislation. These are two areas that have directly have affected our company in the last 74 years and one of the biggest reasons we became SEMA members. We are stronger together and more able to fight new policies that hurt our businesses, and we can work together to create solutions for new legislation. We were one of the first to work with SEMA with testing for ESC.

6. What would you say is/are your most notable achievement(s) to this point in your career? What are you most proud of?

I am incredibly proud to have been selected for the SEMA Person of the Year. It is such an honor to see my name listed with the past amazing SEMA Person of the Year winners. That has been a true honor.

But if I'm honest what I'm most proud of is how I've positively impacted my company and the industry. The Company, because how it positively impacts the 60-plus employees and their families who currently work for us. I am incredibly proud of the culture and team we are building to make all of this happen. I'm incredibly proud of the work I've done for the industry and how it positively has impacted different aspects of SEMA.

### **Part 3 – Industry Perspective**

7. What do you consider to be the top opportunities or threats facing the specialty parts aftermarket over the next five years? Try to be specific to industry trends. You may comment on macroeconomic issues (inflation, unemployment, health care, etc.) but only if they are relevant to your perspective on industry issues.

My two biggest concerns for our industry are around vehicle technology and legislation. I believe most of the opportunities for improvement I see for us can be categorized under either of those umbrellas.

Vehicle technology is changing rapidly. It is changing the way we interact with our vehicles, and I believe this needs more focus. There is increased use of alternative fuel, drivetrains and tighter emissions standards. There are increases in ADAS and autonomous driving technology. All of these areas could create challenges and/or opportunities for our members. These challenges are complex and dynamic. It will not be an easy solution. This is why I believe it is one for SEMA. SEMA is here to solve tough problems.

Legislation is a major concern of mine. I've seen legislation greatly affect our business throughout our 70-plus years. Before seatbelts were installed in vehicles, my grandfather used to sell seatbelts. He refers to the seatbelt as a tough sell, but it was a part of his business he had built. However, in 1968 there was legislation that forced seatbelts to be installed on the factory line. Overnight, this took a significant portion of Hellwig's business away. I tell this story because I do believe these changes will happen and necessary for safer vehicles. In the long run, this was a great move for the safety of vehicles overall, but it still had an effect on a small business. As an association, we have an opportunity to help small businesses through these changes. Just this year my business was immediately impacted by the announcement of the steel tariff. While our company only buys American steel, we still saw a double-digit increases and hoarding in the market. This impacted our customers negatively. During this time, I was able to rely on the SEMA D.C. office to help walk me through what I could do. They helped draft a message for me to put in front of lawmakers. I would like to be in a position on the Board so I can influence our association in a way that helps small businesses weather the storms we will experience in business.

Video in reaction to the steel tariffs:

<https://theshopmag.com/features/video-hellwig-president-warns-tariffs-could-increase-product-pricing>

8. Of the issues you identify above, which ONE concerns you the most as to how it will impact the industry's future? What would you do to initiate change to either expedite a positive outcome or prevent a potential disaster?

Vehicle technology would be my number-one concern if I could have only one. I would like to see us engage with more resources in this space. Grow our relationships with OEMs, energy companies, research labs, engineering schools and design schools.

#### **Part 4 – Association Specific Observations**

9. Do you feel that the Board of Directors and SEMA are currently pursuing the initiatives that are critical to our business segment? What would you place more emphasis on? What would you discontinue? What would you add?

Yes for the most part. I believe the Board of Directors is tackling those tough problems and taking a long view for our association and industry. I have experienced firsthand the SEMA D.C. office working hard for us. I would like to put more emphasis on this member benefit. I do not believe members are fully aware of the support we have in D.C. I experienced the support from this office this year with the steel tariffs. In addition, in the past they have helped us understand Prop. 65 and California sales tax better. Land use is a huge issue for Hellwig and for our industry as a whole. We rely on our customers having the space to get out there and play. I enjoy seeing the regular updates from the D.C. office to show the work that is being done to help keep land available for use.

In regards to vehicle technology resources, I would like to see SEMA grow relationships with colleges focused on automotive technology. I believe there is opportunity to strengthen our relationships with research labs and engineering firms. There is an opportunity for us to be more involved with engineering and design schools. I would like to see us engage with more resources who have frontline experience in the space of vehicle technology.

10. As a SEMA Board member how do you feel you would be uniquely qualified to help address the issues you identified above?

My company has used many of the SEMA resources. As a small company, we have experienced the benefit of SEMA's mission first-hand, which is to help our member businesses succeed and prosper. I know what is available for our members. More importantly, I know what SEMA is capable of doing to help its members. I believe I am perfectly poised to serve as a Board member for the industry and make a strong impact. I am in a position where I need this industry to succeed and prosper for decades to come; I have a long view for this industry. I am at the point in my career and business to be incredibly motivated to do what is necessary to keep this industry healthy. I am fourth-generation and early in my career. Moreover, I want a seat at the table to help steer our future. I am motivated for my company, but for many other companies in our industry like mine.

I run a small, family-owned and -operated business just like many other members of SEMA. I would be able to be their voice. I am taking a proactive approach to the challenges facing our business and could speak to that in the boardroom. I am using SEMA resources to help with the challenges our business faces.

I have been involved in SEMA as a volunteer for more than 10 years now. I understand the process to get things done in SEMA. I have been chair of LTAA and served LTAA for eight years. I served as an ETTN select committee member for two years. I am currently chair of SEMA Cares. I understand how SEMA works from the volunteer side.

We have been through the ESC testing process as a company. I understand what is available for companies and what gaps might exist for companies where SEMA can help.

I have been on SEMA international trips to help grow our business outside of the United States. This is a great member benefit; it allows companies easy access to international markets that seem daunting to tackle without extra support.

Our company uses SDC as its number-one source for data. We have reached the highest level of rating for strength of data.

I have had influence and a first-row seat to ways that SEMA can solve problems. I know I am in a position to be able to help SEMA solve big problems for all our businesses. My experience as a council board liaison, where I sat in the boardroom for a year, gave me a front row seat to see SEMA tackle the big problems. That experience gave me the confidence and knowledge that I would be a great candidate for the Board.

11. What do you see as SEMA's weaknesses?

I believe SEMA's weaknesses can also be identified as their strengths. SEMA's size could be a weakness. In addition, SEMA serves a large industry with many diverse members. It is complex and challenging to serve that many different interested parties. There are so many that SEMA serves that it is difficult to serve all members the same. It is hard to make moves fast because of their size.

12. How about its strengths?

SEMA's size is also an advantage. It has resources to get things done for its members. It has great brand power that is a benefit for its members as well. There is no question SEMA has the resources to take action, I have seen the association repeatedly not afraid to approach tough problems because of the resources available. We have an engaged membership and diverse community. SEMA is member-oriented, and it listens to its members.

13. If you were chosen to chair the Long-Range Planning Committee, which topics or issues would you want your committee to be deliberating on?

I'd like to see these questions on the agenda:

**Vehicle Technology**

What are the new technologies the industry is facing, and what we can do about it?

How are consumer interactions with their vehicles changing?

What are other industries doing about consumer habits and the changing vehicle technology? View energy companies' and the automakers' long-range plans.

How are youth changing their habits and interactions with vehicles? What can we recommend to our industry?

**Government Affairs**

What laws do we see in the next three to five years affecting our business, and how can we support our small-business members?

**SEMA Brand**

How to continue the quality of the SEMA Show as it grows?

How can we continue to grow our SEMA brand?

**Part 5 - About You**

14. Questionnaires can be very limiting. In the space below, share with us anything we didn't ask that you believe will help the Nominating Committee develop a better understanding of you as a candidate:

I have a strong network with many ties in the automotive aftermarket. I have served on a committee, LTAA, and network, ETTN, both, but belong to or have belonged to YEN, SBN, ARMO and PRO. I am approachable and will be a listening ear and voice for our industry.

Right now, I am in my career with a long future ahead of me. I am perfectly poised to support the Board. I have the long view for our association. In addition, I feel like I am a perfect candidate to add some diversity with both age and being female.

Thank you for your consideration.

