

NATE COO

John Lanier



Leadership philosophy: Never rest. Challenge the status quo. Constantly move forward. If you're not moving ahead, you're falling behind.

Favorite quote: "You should change before you have to."
– Jack Welch

Alma mater: University of Minnesota

Closing thoughts: HVAC is an amazing industry. There are so many opportunities, including many high-tech opportunities. The puzzle is getting young people to be aware of these opportunities and helping them see what a terrific career path it can be.

Learn more about NATE: natex.org

How did you become the COO of NATE?

I started my career in the financial/accounting field working in the private sector. From there, I went to work for the NFIB (National Federation of Independent Business), heading up sales for that organization. Then I went to work for Johnson Controls (Building Efficiency Division) also in a sales role. I heard about the Board of Directors at NATE looking for someone to take charge of this organization. My background, with experience, both with an association and in the HVAC trade, made it a good fit.

What changes have occurred under your leadership?

NATE was floundering. The organization hadn't had any direction in a while. I was able to leverage the team in place and made a lot of changes. Together, we put the association back on a positive track.

What is the mission of NATE?

NATE was created in 1997 with the goal of giving technicians the tools needed to be better. It was understood the industry could be improved, if the technicians could improve. Our goal is to improve the competence of the technicians, through certifications. Currently we have 23 certifications available to technicians.

What do you consider to be your company's best asset?

Easily, the entire team at NATE. It's a small organization. We have a limited staff that has accomplished a lot. While doing the daily tasks of keeping the organization running, they also embraced the changes put in place to improve our mission. We changed the exam platform, added several new exams/certifications and got all of our exams available in Spanish.

Where do you see your company in 5 years? 10 years?

The pace of change is so rapid. We've established NATE certifications as the Gold Standard. We plan on branching out beyond certifications. We will build on our credibility to establish more education and training programs. There are 2 new exams on cue to help contractors bring people with no HVAC experience into the industry. These exams will provide a career pathway for these individuals and give the contractors a good indication of whether these candidates are a good fit for the trade.

What advice would you give to a young person just starting in the workforce?

Take full advantage of every opportunity. Never stop learning. Don't shy away from challenges that provide opportunities for growth.