

Gear Metrology Standards and ISO 9000



VIEWPOINT

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I noted with interest the beginning of *Gear Technology's* three-part series on ISO 9000 certification. I also recently attended Brown & Sharpe's/Leitz gear metrology seminar. Both events caused me to smile and reflect.

For the last 40 or more years, I have been hearing about the deplorable condition of the American gear industry. I heard it again at the Brown & Sharpe/Leitz seminar.

Amy Zuckerman makes an extremely important distinction in her article on ISO 9000. She notes that the emphasis is upon "*quality assurance*" not "*product assurance*." She notes that it is possible to make a very poor product very efficiently and be ISO 9000 certified.

Will that help the gear industry? Will it help any industry? Will it strengthen or improve our position in world trade?

One of the things to be gleaned from the Brown & Sharpe/Leitz metrology seminar is that there are standard measurement gauges which most industrialized nations use. The more frightening fact gleaned from the seminar is that gear measurement equipment and its data have never been traceable to these standards.

Is it a wonder that the American gear industry has been in a "deplorable condition" or a state of confusion?

I have learned of a program called "A National Policy for Gear Metrology from NIST and DOE." For general

information, the players are listed as: ASME, AGMA, Penn State University, the National Bureau of Standards and Technology (formerly NSB, now NIST), and the DOE Y-12 Plant.

Having a single traceable standard for gear metrology may go further toward establishing the viability of the American gear industry than anything ISO 9000 may hope to offer. A paramount condition at ISO 9000 is "traceability," but ISO 9000 certifies the traceability of the processes, not the product.

The gear industry may need to evaluate carefully the "promise" of ISO 9000. The gear industry MUST attain a world-verifiable and traceable metrology for its product if it ever hopes to eliminate its "deplorable condition."

It should be noted that this gear metrology investigation began with the "Leitz" last year. It appears that this may be where the money taken from INFAC is now being directed.

I still question the ultimate value of dependency upon national governments to establish the direction and performance of industry.

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