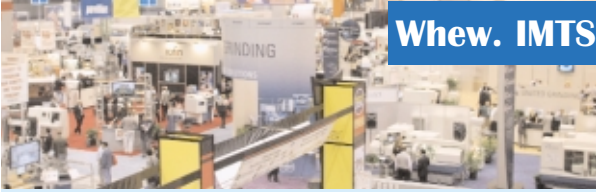


# Breath of Fresh Air

**Whew. IMTS is over, and I'm relieved, in more ways than one.**



Like many of you who exhibited and attended, I'm relieved because IMTS is a big, long, grueling show, and getting through it is an accomplishment in itself. I'm also relieved because I went to the show with some apprehension, but I left with considerable optimism that the gear industry is alive and well.

The raw numbers from IMTS don't tell the real story. In 2002, attendance at the show was 85,000. This year, it was 86,000. On the face of things, that doesn't seem like much cause for celebration. But I was there. I saw the faces of the exhibitors, and I could read the change in attitude by looking at their eyes and at the way they carried themselves. While the overall show experienced only a small increase in attendance, the feeling in the gear pavilion was very upbeat and positive. Psychologically, the change since a year ago at Gear Expo was quite dramatic. Exhibitors and attendees seemed like different people than they were at previous shows—everyone seemed more confident, enthusiastic and revived.

Many gear machine tool exhibitors told us that customers weren't just shopping, they were buying. Customers were very focused and purposeful. They were armed with lists of projects and specific problems that needed solving, as well as lists of suppliers they wanted to see. Perhaps most importantly, they came with shopping lists of machine tools they wanted to buy. Several exhibitors told us they sold machine tools right off the show floor.

In recent years, we've become accustomed to the exhibitors and trade show sponsors putting a good face on things, in spite of the lack of business. But this year, there *was* business, and it showed in the attitudes of the exhibitors. (See our IMTS follow-up article beginning on page 10 to read some of the comments from major exhibitors.)

Those positive feelings carried over into *Gear Technology's* first bi-annual IMTS Dinner, held at Maggiano's restaurant in Chicago. At the dinner, nearly 60 IMTS exhibitors, gear industry suppliers and gear manufacturers had the opportunity to eat, meet and network. They reaffirmed how successfully they thought the show was going, and they told us how busy they were. We even saw among this group the developing of new contacts and relationships that could lead to future business.

Even outside IMTS, there seems to be a lot of activity in the gear industry. Before the show, I spoke to a number of gear manufacturers who weren't going to IMTS. It wasn't that they didn't need new technology or more equipment. They just didn't have time to make the trip because they were too busy making gears. There seems to be more demand, more activity and more business in the gear industry than the raw numbers from IMTS would indicate.

A breath of fresh air can be powerful medicine—both financially and psychologically. IMTS reaffirmed my feeling that our industry is on the upswing. By all indicators, 2005 should be a prosperous year for the gear industry. Hopefully, the level of activity we're seeing now will continue for some time—right up through and beyond Gear Expo 2005, which takes place October 16–19 in Detroit.

IMTS showed that the gear industry is not only alive, but growing again. I'm excited about the future of our industry, which is why I'm already looking forward to Gear Expo—and you should be, too.



**So start making your plans now.  
I'll see you at Gear Expo next fall.**

Michael Goldstein, Publisher & Editor-in-Chief