

## Gear Expo 2007— AN UP-TICK IN ATTENDANCE AND HIGH HOPES FOR 2009



The general impression—whether encouraged by AGMA or developed anecdotally—is that Gear Expo 2007 was a reasonable—though certainly relative—success for many of the exhibitors and attendees. A final count supplied by AGMA shows that 3,035 (1,212 exhibitors and 1,823 attendees) were on hand—an appreciable 20% increase over 2005. A breakdown of visitor demographics reveals that 43 states and 28 foreign countries, spanning six continents, were represented.

And not to bury the lead, but the biggest news to come out this year's show was the AGMA announcement

that, in addition to Expo 2009 moving to Indianapolis, the show will open on a MONDAY. (Please see adjoining sidebar.)

As for this year's expo, Kurt Medert, AGMA vice president and Gear Expo show manager, suggested that it appeared—excepting Sunday and Wednesday—to generate more legitimate interest among attendees in exhibitor offerings.

“What was most striking to me was the number of exhibitors who commented that the higher attendance and the fact that attendees spent more days at the show generated visibly more

foot traffic, and that the attendees were mostly high-quality visitors,” he says.

Another success for the show was the Solutions Center, inaugurated in 2005. In fact, the presentations on a variety of gear industry issues were well attended and received, evidenced by the fact that this year's numbers far outstripped those of two years ago.

“Again, the vast majority of responses were positive,” says Medert. “Eight hundred and sixty six attended the presentations—an average of (approximately) 30 per session.

The obvious show-stoppers—standing room only—were Mike

Bradley's crisp snapshot of the industry's economic forecast, and presentations on the rapidly growing American wind turbine industry by the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA) and the auto industry by leading automotive consultant Casey Selecman.

Beyond AGMA's satisfaction with the show, we also talked to a number of exhibitors to gain their honest impressions of Gear Expo 2007. On whole, most respondents' impressions mirrored those of AGMA. Others, not so much. Following is a sampling covering the show's benefits, suggestions for improvements, and whether they plan on exhibiting in 2009.

"ABA-PGT was very pleased with the booth activity," says Rick Wheeler, company president. "We were pleasantly surprised at the interest in plastic gears; not so much as metal-to-plastic replacements, but for new projects demanding lower weights in smaller torque load requirements. (I would) start the activities on Monday and run a Monday-Friday show. The FTM paper presentations on Sunday are a family hardship for presenters. ABA-PGT plans to exhibit at the 2009 Gear Expo."

"Detroit is a bad venue," says Brian Cluff, vice president of sales and application engineering for Star SU. "And again the expo was poorly attended, although not as badly as the last show. The cost to go to the show exceeds the return we get from it." As for improvements, "Move Gear Expo in with IMTS as a separate pavilion." And for 2009? "We will exhibit with a very small, minimal presence, but only because we are already committed," says Cluff. "After 2009, we will not attend."

Heat treater Solar Atmosphere's sales manager Mike Johnson says, "For 17-4, 440C and 430 grades for thru-hardening, day two was very productive. I commented in the (AGMA post-show) survey that I thought the show should only be two, maybe three days long. A

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## EVENTS




half-day on Sunday was a waste, and the fourth day was dead. Good show, though. It yielded more PR than I thought it would.”

“Visitors seemed to be much more focused this year—more specific projects/needs to be discussed—less than ‘just visiting,’” says Jim Vosmik, president of Drake Manufacturing. “Yes, we plan on exhibiting in 2009.”

Lori Rugh, AWEA (American Wind Energy Association) marketing manager for exhibits and sponsorships, says, “(We) found the show to be greatly beneficial, as we raised the visibility and awareness of gear manufacturers about the wind industry and the need of their products in our industry. The show is great and the only improvement might be to have more folks staffing the registration desk, as there seemed to be a bottleneck there.” She adds that “hopefully,” AWEA will be there in 2009. “We really appreciate all that AGMA did for AWEA. It was all great.”

Lastly, Carl Eckberg, vice president of gear products for Bourn & Koch, Inc., says, “The show offered an excellent opportunity to introduce new products to the attendees. The machine (we) exhibited was not for sale and was intended to be used in our own gear department. But of the three companies that were interested in purchasing it, one is writing the order this week. We will build a duplicate for our own use.” Eckberg adds he is “OK” with the show as is, and, “Yes,” they will be back in 2009.

On balance, even the show’s harshest





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critics would have to admit that this year's Gear Expo was at least a positive step forward. After all, it beats losing attendance. One might reasonably expect—as AGMA most assuredly does—that the improvement in this year's numbers bodes well for 2009 when the show setting will be in—with sincere apologies to the Motor City—a thriving urban setting.

**Gentlemen and Ladies,  
Start Your Engines. It's Indy  
in '09. And ASM, Too.**

It is now fact that Gear Expo 2009 will return to a city with a long and legendary motor sport pedigree—Indianapolis, IN. AGMA made it official in announcing last month that Gear Expo 2009 will be held at the Indiana Convention Center. Show dates (tentative as we go to press) are September 14–17, and—to the delight of many—note that the show will NOT open on a Sunday. The Monday opening is due to a scheduling conflict at the Center. AGMA's Medert also says that "minor modifications" to the schedule are also under consideration, but further details were not available.

"Gear Expo '95 was held (in Indianapolis) and everything went well," he says.

Of equal significance, Gear Expo 2009 will for the first time be co-located with another show—the ASM International Heat Treating Society Conference and Exposition. This new partnership will add upwards of 4,000 attendees from 25 countries to the mix, a move that many longtime exhibitors and attendees will applaud. With—until this year—a continued slip in attendance for the last several shows, those with influence in the gear industry—and with AGMA—have been calling for just such a new strategy. Some have suggested a pavilion at IMTS; others have looked to join a show like the ASM conference and exhibition. By most accounts, the show needed tweaking, and thus the change.

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