

AGMA is Here for You

John Cross, Chairman of the Board, AGMA

The annual Gear Technology State of the Gear Industry Report is always a must read for any industry leader. This type of study fits nicely into AGMA's overall mission, which includes providing business intelligence to the industry.

As Chair of AGMA, I had the opportunity to review the early tabulations, and wanted to share my perspectives on what jumped out to me. This is not an exhaustive overview but more of a reflection of what I thought was critical, and resonated based on my own 25-year industry career.

First — it is absolutely clear that everyone is starting to get onto the “electric drive is coming” train. Four years ago, AGMA's Board of Directors adopted a Strategic Plan that included monitoring the development of electric drive — we knew it was coming, but we were not sure when it was going to directly impact the gear industry, and for which applications. We saw it as an emerging technology.

With this study—and having hundreds of mentions — combined with what we are seeing in the consumer auto space — it is absolutely crystal clear that electric drive is moving from an emerging technology to an existing technology.

The key question is: How does this impact your company? And what response strategy should you have?

There are opportunities within the space — Noise, Vibration and Harshness will be a major focus, as companies attempt to electrify the power transmission. How can you support that shift? What engineering can you bring to the solution customers are looking for? Will the gear cutting operation move from the customer to the supplier base, and can you play a role?

Larger gear companies have already shifted their technology solutions from gears alone, to a more rounded out approach which includes fluid power as well as electric drive. Does your company have an opportunity to adjust its product portfolio? Should you do that organically, via internal investment? Or make a strategic acquisition?

These are now critical questions that gear companies involved in an industry being impacted by electric drive should be asking and developing plans to adjust and evolve.

To help support your efforts to answer these questions, I suggest you join AGMA — and become part of our Electric Drive subcommittee on Emerging Technology. This group now has 80 members participating in regular meetings to discuss the impact of electric drive on a variety of markets, and is going into depth on the technology behind each development, to ensure industry knows the ripple effects.

AGMA also tracks the Industrial Internet of Things, Additive Technology and New Alloys, and has subcommittees for each for your team to participate and keep up.

Joining the committee — which is for members only — gives your team an edge on the competition as you stay ahead of the developments that industry is clearly saying are coming, and impacting us in 2021 and beyond.

Second — training is a critical issue facing our industry, and when I say training — it is not just the simple act of training a person how to run a CNC machine — it includes finding a person

willing to work for the company too! You must have people before you can train them.

We have all known that the aging workforce is an issue for us; we simply need to walk the shop floor to clearly see that our teams are getting older, and there are not as many younger faces coming into the industry.

And when we do find talent, they are often as green as green can be, and we need to spend months to get them up to speed on every aspect of manufacturing.

So the questions are simple; the response strategies are more complex.

What formal training regime do you have in place to take a brand-new employee from off the street, to either engineering a power transmission system in the office, or producing one on the shop floor?

What does your new employee do on the first week of work, the third month? The first year? How does their learning progress?


At AGMA, if you are a member — you have incredible FREE resources to support your new employees' first week. AGMA has developed, with the assistance of the AGMA Foundation, the free workforce training series, online training videos that provide a significant entry-level overview of gear engineering and production. At ASI, we require every new employee to devote 20 hours to go through the videos within the first two weeks.

After that, AGMA has more than 20 online or face-to-face classes that your teams can take to support every single facet of your operations. From design to gear failure, and all the steps between — AGMA has the best technical training available to the industry today, period. We added operator level classes in 2020, so we now support both your engineering teams and your shop teams.

If you are an AGMA member, you can make the AGMA Education Classes a critical part of your formal training program. Why not contact the Education Team (education@agma.org) and get the class schedule on your calendar, and then make sure to send your team to the various classes as part of their growth and development strategy?

The year 2021 is going to be a challenging one — as the survey illustrates. COVID-19 continues to drag projects down, uncertainty abounds, and we have a new Administration impacting policies and trade. These trends with the two I outlined mean that your company should turn to AGMA now more than ever. We are spending time and effort to stay on top of trends impacting OUR industry, because we are working together to create the industry's future.

If you are a member, join our committees and be part of the team building the future.

If you aren't a member, join AGMA and get involved — it may be the best business decision you make. 



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