

# The Next Generation of Gear Specialists

## *Beyond AGMA's Gear School*

**AGMA** has an excellent Training School for Gear Manufacturing. It's a great product providing a great service to the gear industry. Thus far we've educated 117 employees from 71 companies; students range from new hires with no experience to company presidents. Essentially every class since December, 1992, has been sold out.

But what happens next?

Based on my conversations with members and on formal surveys, the biggest problem we have today and the most frequently asked question is, "Where can I get a reliable source of qualified employees?" The AGMA Foundation recently completed a study (funded by the Gleason Foundation) of the needs of the gear industry in the future and found, not too surprisingly, that education and training were near the top of the list of concerns.

There are a number of good programs currently available that cover specific manufacturing and design issues. Most of us use the courses offered by machine tool builders. AGMA has other educational programs, such as the Fall Technical Meeting. Ohio State University and SME, among others, offer short courses that help us all. Our own Gear School has begun offering advanced courses such as our Hob Sharpening Workshop.

These are good for the professional development of our current staffs, but what about the in-depth training of new employees? What about recruiting new people to the field? Corporate-funded,

in-house training is beyond the reach of all but the largest of our businesses, and the lack of skilled personnel entering the gear industry is no longer news, but a fact of life.

What to do?

I'm excited to report that the Director of Manufacturing Technology, Mr. Prem Sud, and Dean of Skills and Manufacturing Programs, Dr. Shirley Knazze, of Daley College in Chicago have been working on the problem and have presented a concept to me, which, if accepted by the industry, could help us find the employees we need well into the future. And this educational program can be readily "cloned" into any community in which our members operate.

The program would be open to any student entering Daley College and especially to current employees of gear companies. Students would take two courses each semester (the time can be extended if students take one course per semester). At the end of this training, the student/employee would receive an Advanced Certificate from Daley College. He or she would then have three options: transfer to the Illinois Institute of Technology's Bachelor of Manufacturing Technology Program, continue at Daley College for an additional year to receive an Associate's Degree or enter or return to full-time work.

Full-time Daley College students would take these courses in the context of their regular college curriculum. If your company sponsored students, it would be expected to develop a cooperative work/study program that would allow them to attend classes while continuing to work essentially full-time.

What will students learn in the program? The curriculum is a mix of basic college courses such as English and

math, supplemented by formal education (and some hands-on labs) in manufacturing. The selections allow for flexibility, so the courses can be tailored to meet the needs of the student and of his or her employer.

The program is affordable. The preliminary estimate of the full two-year program is in the range of \$2,500.

What do you have in the end? The Daley College curriculum has the multiple objectives of 1) providing a strong education in mechanical and gear manufacturing skills, 2) helping enhance the skills of current employees and 3) developing long-term employees to cover attrition and growth in the future.

From my viewpoint, this is clearly a win-win arrangement: Employees become educated in both hands-on and college instruction and finish the program as qualified technologists. Employers strengthen their workforce base and gain access to a constant stream of motivated, educated future employees, and our community and society benefit because we are teaching practical, usable skills that lead to a real job at the end. It's good for our industry, our companies and for the individuals who might otherwise be stuck in low-wage, low-advancement positions.

I'd be interested in your views. Please contact Mr. Prem Sud at Daley College (312) 838-7836 or me at (708) 543-9570 if you'd like to be part of this new program. ☉

*Based on an article, "How to Find Good Employees," which appeared in the AGMA News Digest, July/August 1995.*

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