

PULSE BEAT

Every now and then a magazine has to take its own pulse or lose sight of its key mission—providing its readers with information they want. We did it this last year through surveys, interviews with subscribers and focus groups. Our basic question was, how are we doing?

The answers were encouraging (and in some cases flattering) for us, although the people we asked were more than willing to share their ideas for how we could improve. We'd like to share some of their observations with all of you and give you a chance to put in your two cents worth as well.

While most of the people we asked liked the "new" *Gear Technology* and its wider variety of article subjects and types, almost everyone encouraged us to remember our "core competency"; that is, providing technical articles about the design and manufacture of gears and geared products. That's still the thing you seem to want most. A close second was material that is timely. Information about new research, products and processes is very important to you. As we plan our upcoming issues, we'll be keeping these facts in mind.

The readers we spoke with reminded us again of the fact that many of you keep past issues of the magazine and use them for reference. They also expressed concern about the difficulty of finding particular articles from past issues. We've taken the hint, and as the year goes on, we'll be updating our indexes and developing ways to deliver back-issue information to you efficiently.

Some of the most helpful information, from our point of view, was the discussion of reading habits and the ways you do (or don't) respond to the magazine. For years one of our biggest challenges has been getting you to contact our advertisers and us through our reader response cards. We keep asking ourselves, is there a better way to do this? According to the subscribers we spoke with, several factors come into play. The need for rapid response is a key one. As the pace of business has picked up, the need for information NOW as opposed to weeks or months from now has increased. Also affecting the way you use the response cards is the fact that because the gear industry is so small and collegial, it's just easier to call a friend at the company whose product you're interested in and get the information directly.

The traditional reader response system apparently just isn't fast enough. With that in mind, we're working on developing ways to help you get the product information you need more quickly and directly.

We're still encouraging you to contact us through reader service cards or by fax, phone or mail. Your input is absolutely vital to us and our advertisers; but we understand that business realities today require us to make that process easier and faster for you. Therefore, we're also working on ways to widen our lines of communication and make them more user-friendly.

Pulse-taking is always a salutary exercise. Thanks to all of you who have taken time in the past year to let us know what you think about how we're doing. We appreciate the input. Keep your eyes out in the coming months to see the use we make of the information you've given us. And keep those comments coming. They're absolutely key to making *Gear Technology* the best and most useful magazine you receive.



A stylized, handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Michael Goldstein".

Michael Goldstein
Publisher and Editor-in-Chief