

S P R E A D I N G

The Word

Long-time readers of these pages will know that I have always felt strongly about the subject of professional education. There's nothing more important for an individual's career development than keeping up with current technology. Likewise, there's nothing more important that a company can do for itself and its employees than seeing to it they have the professional education they need. Giving people the educational tools they need to do their jobs is a necessary ingredient for success.

But one of the problems with this worthy goal is finding out who's offering good, reliable training in gear-related subjects, and where it's being offered. Now, thanks to the AGMA Foundation, there is a solution. It has compiled a booklet containing lists of gear manufacturing and related training courses, detailed descriptions of the various curricula, dates of classes, costs—in short, everything you need to know to find out about particular courses.

This booklet, "Education & Training for the Gear Industry," is available from AGMA headquarters (703-684-0211). The 1997 version should be available by the time this editorial goes to print. This book is a "must have" for anyone interested in keeping up with the latest and best gear training available in the U.S.

The book is well-organized, broken down by subject, type of training (courses or seminars) and level of difficulty. It also includes instructor credentials and detailed contact information about each organization offering training. The AGMA Foundation deserves full marks for pulling all this material together and organizing it in usable form.

Having said all that, I do have one quibble, not with the book, but with the Foundation. The 1996 edition of the book was priced at \$12.95, with free copies going to "principal members" of AGMA. As of this writing, pricing information was unavailable for the 1997 edition.

Now no one knows better than I do what paper and print cost. Trust me—they're not cheap. Still, this charge seems counter-productive. I assume the Foundation's goal is to support these educational efforts and encourage participation in them. There's not a school in the country that charges for its catalog of courses. This seems to me to be the equivalent of a company saying, "We make a really good product, and if you send us \$12.95, we'll tell you all about it."

If the Foundation feels it has to recoup its printing costs, it would make more sense to charge a modest fee to the organizations whose courses appear in the book. Or, since the Foundation (and AGMA itself) are non-profits, maybe the book should be looked on as a service they provide for the industry. A charge for shipping and handling seems reasonable enough, as does a charge for companies that might want dozens of copies to distribute to customers. But \$12.95 a pop to individuals just for information that, arguably, AGMA should have been providing for its members anyway seems a bit much.

A highly trained work force is absolutely essential to the continuing success of the gear industry, and the AGMA Foundation has done us all a service by gathering together this training information in convenient and usable form. Now I'd like to see the Foundation take the next step, and make it available and affordable to everyone in the industry who could benefit from it.



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