

Great Expotations?

Most Say Economy Won't Put a Damper on the Gear Industry's Big Event

William R. Stott

Even with some segments of the gear industry facing economic uncertainty, Gear Expo exhibitors and potential visitors are looking forward to this year's show. Instead of focusing on buying and selling, many of those involved with the 2001 show have chosen to focus on the show's value as a marketplace for knowledge.

Recently, *Gear Technology* asked a number of scheduled exhibitors and potential attendees what they expected from this year's show. The responses varied.

Some potential visitors will not be attending the show this year due to budgetary restraints. Others are going with the intention of buying machine tools or finding new suppliers. But the majority of those we spoke with emphasized the importance of Gear Expo as a place to gather information.

Information should abound at what AGMA expects to be the largest Gear Expo ever. According to the list of scheduled exhibitors, it's also going to be more diverse than ever, with all segments of the gear industry represented. As of June



1, those scheduled to exhibit included 50 gear manufacturers, 41 machine tool manufacturers, 15 cutting tool manufacturers, 10 materials suppliers, 10 commercial heat treaters and a number of additional suppliers.

Visitors Hungry for Information

William Fuss, president of Hanover Gear of Hanover, PA, is one of those who considers Gear Expo valuable for its information. He's gone to previous Gear Expo shows and once bought a machine tool right off the floor, but his company isn't in the market for machine tools or other suppliers this year. But, Fuss says it's still important for him and 1-3 other people from the company to attend the show. "For us, it's more of a fact-finding

mission," Fuss says, pointing out the importance of staying on top of the emerging technologies. In particular, he says, he'll be looking at metrology and gear shaping technology.

For Fuss, the slow economy isn't a deterrent. "It can't last forever," Fuss says. "When it does break, we'd like to know what's going to keep us at a competitive level."

Gathering information is also important to James M. Wasiloff, who works for the mechanical/structural subsystems department at the automatic transmission engineering operations of Ford Motor Co. in Livonia, MI. "I'd like to see what technology's changing out there—what can be leveraged for our projects here,"

Hotels for Gear Expo 2001 Participants

For lodging, AGMA has blocks of rooms at four downtown Detroit hotels for Gear Expo 2001 exhibitors and visitors.

The American Gear Manufacturers Association negotiated reduced rates for the hotels for expo participants. The hotels are within walking distance of or are a short ride from Cobo Center.

Expo participants are responsible for making their own reservations at the four hotels. When making reservations, participants should use the telephone and fax numbers listed below and mention the association or the expo to receive the reduced rates. Also, reservations must be made before the cut-off dates listed to insure the availability of rooms.

Detroit Marriott Renaissance Center Rate: \$132.00 Single/Double Cut-off Date: Sept. 5

Renaissance Center, Detroit, MI 48243-1003
Phone: (313) 568-8000 or (800) 352-0831 • Fax: (313) 568-8146

The Detroit Marriott Renaissance Center is three blocks from Cobo Center and has indoor access to the People Mover, an elevated train system for downtown Detroit that can be ridden to Cobo Center.

Crowne Plaza Pontchartrain Rate: \$112.00 Single/Double Cut-off Date: Sept. 18

2 Washington Blvd., Detroit, MI 48226 • Phone: (313) 965-0200 • Fax: (313) 965-9464

The Crowne Plaza Pontchartrain is across the street from Cobo Center.

Detroit Downtown Courtyard by Marriott Rate: \$145.00 Single/Double Cut-off Date: Sept. 9

333 E. Jefferson Ave., Detroit, MI 48226 • Phone: (313) 222-7700 or (800) 321-2211 • Fax: (313) 222-8517

Formerly the Doubletree Hotel, the Detroit Downtown Courtyard by Marriott is near a People Mover station, where people can take a ride to Cobo Center.

Atheneum Suite Hotel Rate: \$177.00 Single/Double Cut-off Date: Sept. 2

1000 Brush Ave., Detroit, MI 48226
Phone: (313) 962-2323 or (800) 772-2323 • Fax: (313) 962-2424

Located in Greektown, an ethnic neighborhood, the Atheneum Suite Hotel is near a People Mover station, where people can take a ride to Cobo Center.

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- Inspection equipment manufacturers
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It may be the most important stop you make at Gear Expo.

Also, we'll sign you up for a chance to win our one-of-a-kind gear clock, which will be given away at the show!



says Wasiloff, who will be attending Gear Expo for the first time this year.

Wasiloff's official job title is "6-Sigma Black Belt Candidate." He's one of a group of specialists responsible for helping Ford achieve the company's goal of six-sigma quality. His primary interest is in improving the life of gears in automotive transmissions, and he'll be attending Gear Expo to learn about processes and techniques that could help. "If there is a new process to improve the life of a gear, and it could be demonstrated in one of our robustness programs, it could become a six-sigma project at Ford," Wasiloff says.

Exhibitors Eager to Provide Answers

Answering questions for visitors like Wasiloff is of primary interest to many exhibitors. Some of the larger exhibitors will spend hundreds of thousands of dollars exhibiting at Gear Expo. Still, they say they don't expect all visitors to be buyers. In fact, based on their comments, many of the exhibitors seem to welcome information gatherers.

"We're looking forward to customers visiting our booth not just to see the hardware, but we also want customers to bring their problems to us," says Ian Shearing, vice president of sales for Mitsubishi's Gear Technology Center of Wixom, MI.

Mitsubishi will have experts on hand to discuss gear manufacturing challenges, and they'll be able to address any gear or machine problems, including maintenance or service issues, says Shearing.

He adds that Mitsubishi is looking forward to unveiling some new technology, like a synchronized honing machine. The machine is similar to others offered on the marketplace, but it's new for Mitsubishi. On the new machine, the workpiece axis and the honing wheel axis are controlled by separate servomotors. The two axes are timed together to provide improved tooth spacing and lead control in the honing process.

Mitsubishi will also be presenting upgraded technology on its ST40 CNC shaping machine, a model based on the guideless shaper Mitsubishi introduced four years ago. The ST40 comes with a "quick return stroke," which is faster than

the cutting stroke instead of just being an idle stroke. According to Shearing, the quick return stroke saves idle time and makes the machine more productive.

Whether visitors are looking at the machine with current interest or even the slightest future interest isn't important, Shearing says. "Clearly, with the current economic climate, orders are down this year. This is a perfect opportunity to display new technology and expose it to the customers in preparation for the comeback."

The management at Gleason Corp. is also approaching the show with a positive outlook.

"Despite the softening in the economy and the automotive industry, from our perspective, we still see a lot of activity, so we're hoping for a good show," says Mark Hiscock, Gleason's vice president of regional operations for the Americas.

Gleason executives say their focus at the show won't be on sales, anyway. "We don't really go to this trade show, or any other, with the intention of selling off the floor," says Alan R. Finegan, Gleason's manager of market planning & research. Instead, Gleason's goals are more information-based. The company hopes to reinforce its position in the marketplace, strengthen relationships with customers, and unveil new technology, Finegan says.

Finegan wouldn't divulge any specific information about the new technology. He only hinted by saying "We consider it significant," with Hiscock adding that "the cat will be let out of the bag at the show."

Raymond Wagner, vice president of marketing and sales for Nachi Machining Technology Co., also sees the exchange of information as crucial at a show like Gear Expo. "The people who come to trade shows are looking for competitive edges," Wagner says. "They're looking to learn, and they're looking for choices."

The choices being offered by Nachi this year include some incremental advances in technology, including increased manufacturing speed, lower energy consumption, reduction in floor space and improvements in quality, Wagner says.

For example, the newest model of Nachi's vertical roll forming machine,

the PFM610E, is an updated version of the machine shown at IMTS 2000 and Gear Expo 99. The manufacturer has added the "E" to the model to stand for economy and ecology. One of the unique features of the machine is that it can roll parts "semi-dry," using a fine, water-soluble or vegetable oil mist that leaves finished parts with very little oil on them.

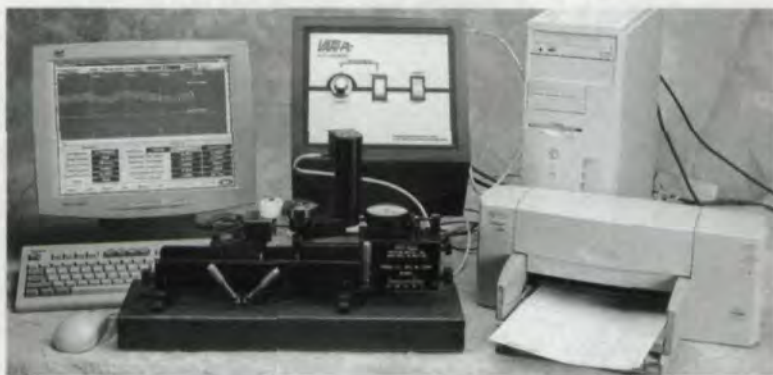
Also, Nachi will be focusing on its DuAl brand hobs, which are specially

manufactured and coated to be able to hob dry or with coolant.

Even More Knowledge

The show's organizers have also tried to promote Gear Expo as a place for gathering information. The show is scheduled immediately after AGMA's Fall Technical Meeting, which takes place Oct. 3-5 in Detroit. At the meeting, about a dozen technical papers will be presented. In addition, a special session of the

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basic course from AGMA's Training School for Gear Manufacturing will be offered Oct. 8-10. Also, the Society of Manufacturing Engineers is conducting four gear-related seminars at the show. The seminars are: "Gear Metrology" on Oct. 8, "The Preliminary Gear Design Thought Process" on Oct. 9, "Gear Shaping Manufacturing Dynamics" on Oct. 9, and "Advanced Gear Processing and Manufacturing" on Oct. 10.

Location is Key

Many people are also encouraged about this year's Gear Expo based on the location in Detroit, which should make it more convenient for the gear industry, which is concentrated in the Midwest.

"It's very difficult to predict what the attendance is going to be," says Shearing. "We're hoping that because of the location that the attendance is going to be good."

Finegan shared similar comments about Detroit. "The location is always key," Finegan said. "For us, the Detroit location is always successful."

John Clare Brennan, manager of clamping technology for Emuge Corp., is also looking forward to the show this year. "I think the Detroit show really has been, in the past, the best of the shows," he says. "This year, we foresee the show with enthusiasm."

Prior to settling on Detroit for the 2001 show, AGMA had been considering holding Gear Expo in Charlotte, NC. After lower-than-expected attendance at Gear Expo 99 in Nashville though, the organizers decided to return to Detroit, where attendance was more favorable in 1997.

While most exhibitors see Detroit's central location as an advantage, some potential visitors attach a stigma to the city, which has struggled in recent years to overcome its negative image. "Detroit's had a lot of rebuilding, but it's still Detroit," says Fuss, who added that he did not attend Gear Expo in 1997 because it was in Detroit.

Gear Expo Unlike Any Other Show

Most of the exhibitors and potential visitors we talked to expressed the opinion that Gear Expo is crucial to their businesses. They say the show is unique because no other show focuses exclusively on the gear industry.

Shearing says one of the great advantages of this show over any other is that "everyone who comes into our booth wants to talk about gears."

Wagner echoes this support for Gear Expo. "There's always going to be a place for the AGMA Gear Expo," he says. "Nothing replaces being able to see the metal being cut and talking to people about the technology." ⚙️

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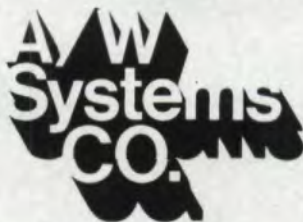
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