

# Expo Exhibitors Look for Economic Upswing

Joseph L. Hazelton

**C**ompanies in the gear industry are looking for signs of an economic upswing as they prepare for Gear Expo 2003, and several are seeing such a sign.

The sign is quoting.

"Quoting activity has been heavier starting in the first quarter," says Dave Melton, expositions/communications manager for Gleason Corp. of Rochester, NY. "We are seeing products are being quoted, but because of the war [in Iraq], [purchases] are being pushed back."

Quoting is also up at Contour Hardening Inc. in Indianapolis, IN. Quoting has increased for its contract processing and heat treat systems.

"Which would be a pretty good indication that something's getting ready to bust loose," says Contour's vice presi-

dent, Michael R. Chaplin.

In Alexandria, VA, Kurt Medert, vice president of the American Gear Manufacturers Association (AGMA), adds he's been hearing generally positive talk about business among gear manufacturers and suppliers through several recent association meetings.

At American Metal Treating Co., though, Bruce Devney is talking to gear manufacturers and isn't hearing encouraging news. "Nobody is talking right now about any rosy projections for the next six months," says Devney, president of the Cleveland, OH-based company.

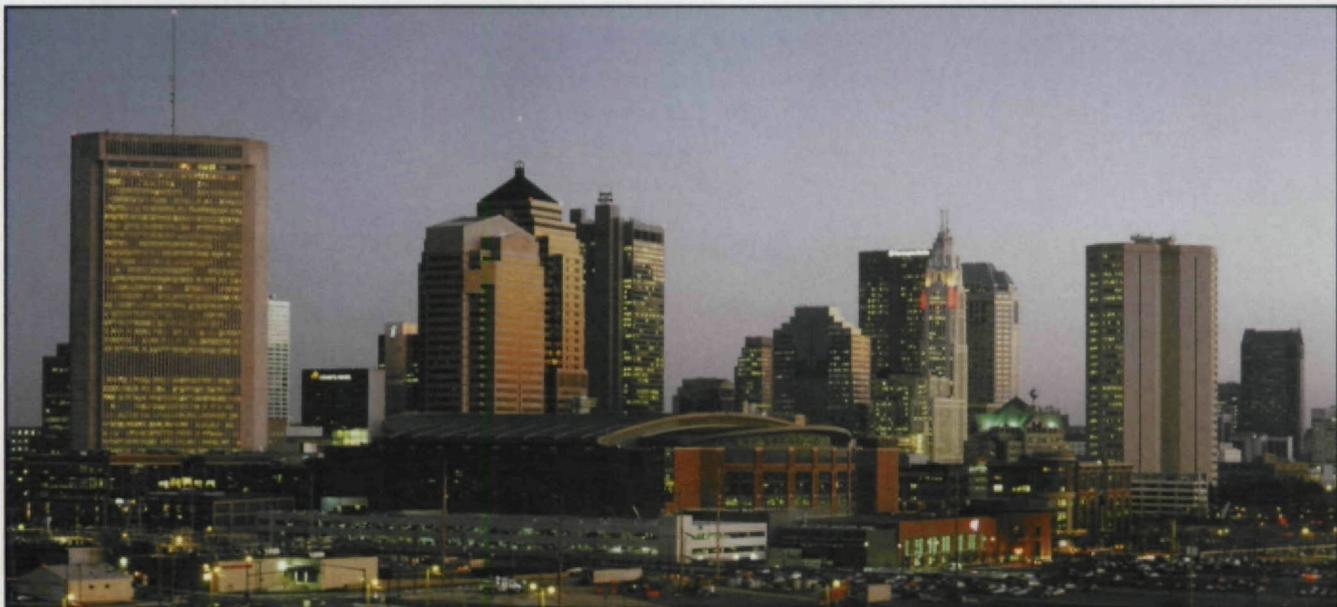
David Goodfellow, president of SU America Inc. of Hoffman Estates, IL, says, "We're hoping there will be some kind of resurgence in the gear industry by that time."

That time is Oct. 5-8, when the AGMA will hold Gear Expo 2003 in Ohio, at the Greater Columbus Convention Center.

But, with the economic slowdown, Melton expects expo attendance to be down. Devney agrees: "I expect fewer attendees, traffic should be slower—maybe even less exhibitors."

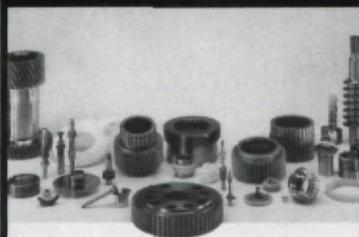
Goodfellow notes, though, the expo is in the heart of the Midwest—Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin—which is a "fairly substantial gear industry territory."

For a sense about attendance, *Gear Technology* surveyed people at 20 companies who were potential expo attendees. The survey was informal, so its results aren't representative. Still, of 20 companies, 11 replied they'd be sending



The city of Columbus, OH, will be home to Gear Expo 2003, which will be held Oct. 5-8. (Photo courtesy of Nationwide Insurance.)

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In Columbus, more than 130 gear-industry organizations will exhibit at Gear Expo 2003. (Photo courtesy of Rod Berry.)

at least one person to the expo.

None of the people surveyed, though, replied that he'd be looking at machinery with the possibility of buying.

Still, Melton expects attendees to be a more focused, serious crowd. "They'll be looking hard at what new technologies are out there," the Gleason manager says. "They'll be more serious buyers than tire kickers."

Serious buyers are what A/W Systems Co. got at Gear Expo 2001 and are what it's hoping for again. "We probably got 12 to 15 good solid leads that turned into customers," says Ross Deneau, vice president of manufacturing for A/W, located in Royal Oak, MI.

A/W is one of what seems to be the industry's "fortunate few." The slowing economy hasn't touched the cutting-tool company—"Our particular case, it's never slowed down," Deneau says.

He explains A/W's repair work increased a lot—"When the economy slows down, people look to repair [more] than to replace." More recently, Deneau's seen increased buying of new tooling. After all, products eventually wear out.

And Gear Expo is a chance to look at new products.

Star Cutter Co. of Farmington Hills, MI, and SU America will feature their

lines of gear-related products, consolidated through Star-SU Inc. and displayed in their shared expo space. The space will also feature Star-SU's line of Fellows gear shaper cutting tools, as well as a Fellows gear shaping machine from Bourn & Koch Machine Tool Co. of Rockford, IL.

In its space, Gleason will exhibit its 245 TWG, a threaded wheel grinding machine, and the GMX 275, an analytical gear tester. The GMX is first in a new series of analytical gear testers jointly developed by Gleason and Mahr GmbH of Gottingen, Germany.

A/W will display blades (both carbide and high speed steel), cutter bodies, hobs, shaper cutters and other products. A/W expects to feature its alliance with Klingelberg Oerlikon Technology Center (KOTC) of Saline, MI. The two companies will keep separate spaces at the expo, though.

American Metal Treating Co. will display an induction hardening process for internal gears. The CNC process can treat internal gears with outside diameters up to 30 inches and diametral pitches from 2 to 6.

Contour Hardening will exhibit a dual-frequency hardening process that can send low and medium frequencies and radio frequencies through one coil.

## New Business Allies Combine Expo Spaces

Like the companies of Sigma Pool, several newly allied businesses will have combined spaces at Gear Expo 2003.

The allied businesses are: Star Cutter Co. and SU America Inc., Bourn & Koch Machine Tool Co. and SU America, and Gleason Corp. and Mahr GmbH.

At Gear Expo 2001, Bourn & Koch of Rockford, IL; Star Cutter of Farmington Hills, MI; and SU America of Hoffman Estates, IL, occupied their own spaces. At Gear Expo 2003, they'll occupy one 3,200-square-foot space.

This combining comes from two alliances. The first consolidated the gear-related product lines of Star Cutter and SU America. Created in early 2002, the alliance resulted in a joint company, Star-SU Inc., for selling the consolidated lines.

The second alliance was between Bourn & Koch and SU America via the gear-related product lines of defunct Fellows Corp.

Founded in 1896, Fellows manufactured gear shaping machines and cutting tools from its headquarters in North Springfield, VT. On Feb. 13, 2002, Fellows ceased operations as its parent company, Goldman Industrial Group, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

By summer 2002, Fellows' manufacturing assets had been sold and split between Bourn & Koch, which acquired the assets related to gear shaper machines, and Star-SU, which acquired the assets related to gear shaper cutting tools.

The two companies also agreed Star-SU would be responsible for promoting, representing and selling Bourn & Koch-built Fellows gear shapers through Star-SU and Bourn & Koch distribution channels.

David Goodfellow, SU America's president, says this expo will be a chance for previous Fellows customers to be reintroduced to Fellows products, which have been partly redesigned and re-engineered.

Reflecting another alliance, Gleason of Rochester, NY, will share its 2,500-square-foot space with Mahr of Gottingen, Germany. In 2001, Mahr arranged with Gleason to use Gleason's G-AGE software on Mahr's PRIMAR form and gear measuring machine.

Their partnership soon became much more extensive. At the start of 2002, Gleason became the sales and support agent for Mahr's gear metrology products around the world. The products included the gear-specific version of Mahr's PRIMAR machine.

Gleason and Mahr also started to jointly develop new gear metrology products, which would be sold under the brand name "Gleason Mahr." Later in 2002, the two companies introduced the GMX 275, the first in a new series of analytical gear testers from the joint arrangement. ○

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Besides new products, Gear Expo is a chance to talk.

Not surprisingly, exhibitors expect talk in the aisles to be about the economy.

Devney expects the "aisle talk" to include the continuing movement of gear manufacturing overseas to eastern Europe, mainland China and India.

Chaplin expects talk about the economy too, but he adds people will also be talking about quoting activity in their own companies and what it means.

Goodfellow says he expects talk to include gear manufacturers themselves having more chances to quote gear jobs for the automotive and truck industry as it continues to outsource more of its

manufacturing.

As of June 3, the AGMA had 135 exhibitors set to occupy more than 38,000 square feet of space in Columbus' convention center. In 2001, Gear Expo had 192 exhibitors who occupied 57,000 square feet.

Medert, however, says many companies are waiting until the last minute before deciding whether to exhibit. He adds they're waiting in the hope that there'll be an economic upswing.

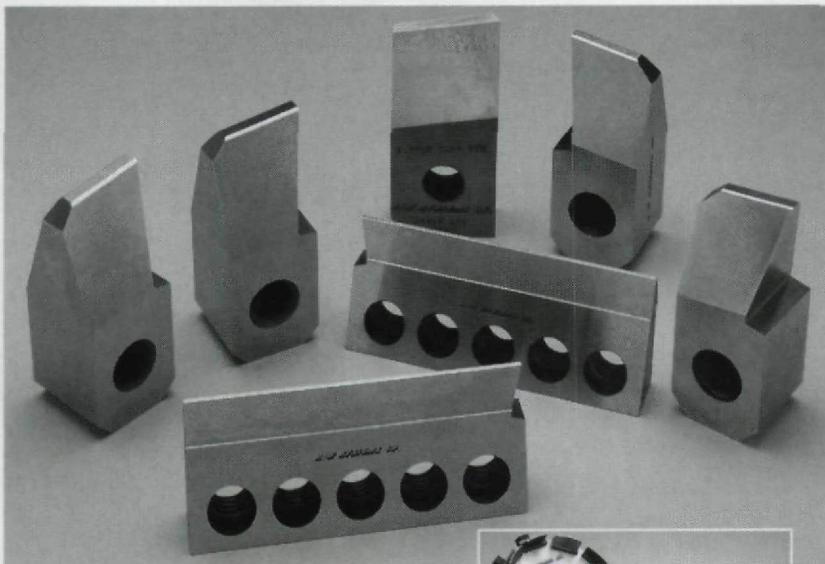
Despite them, Medert says: "Overall, I expect the same high-quality show we've always had."

Besides U.S. companies, the expo will host exhibitor companies from Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, India, the People's Republic of China, Spain, Switzerland and Taiwan. Other non-U.S. companies will be represented through their American operations, such as Mitsubishi Gear Technology Center of Wixom, MI, and SU America.

In three months, these and other exhibitors will gather for the gear industry's trade show. By then, the possible upswing that several see may be an actual upswing.

As Goodfellow says: "We're hoping that there's some sense of recovery by then." ⚙

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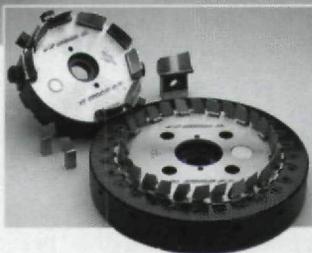
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