

Crash Course on New Technology

AGMA Reflects on Gear Expo 2013

Matthew Jaster, Senior Editor

It's nice to see old friends. It's also advantageous to make new ones. Gear Expo has always been a family reunion of sorts, but it's first and foremost an opportunity to show off the latest and greatest technologies that are impacting the gear industry today. With this in mind, *Gear Technology* recently spoke with those responsible for putting the Fall Technical Meeting (FTM) and Gear Expo 2013 together in Indianapolis. We learned that the show is growing, technology is playing a larger role and that education is vital to Gear Expo's success.

"While there are plenty of advantages to attending Gear Expo, I think it always comes back to the new technologies and new gear applications," says Joe Franklin, AGMA president. "This is an opportunity to improve what you do with your business."

Within a five-day period, visitors to Indianapolis have an opportunity to hear the latest technical presentations at the FTM, browse the Gear Expo and ASM Heat Treat exhibit halls and attend short courses taught by leading gear industry professionals like Ray Drago and Robert Errichello.

"Gear Expo 2013 features a broader range of exhibitors covering the entire gear manufacturing process," says Jenny Blackford, AGMA director of marketing and communications. "There are also a good number of gear manufacturers who

are there to talk with gear buyers. It's a great mixture. We're

happy to report that the 2013 show is about 20 percent larger than the 2011 show in Cincinnati, in fact, it's the largest Gear Expo since 2001."

FTM Kicks Off Festivities

The great thing about the years that the FTM coincides with Gear Expo is the educational opportunities throughout the week. "They don't end with the FTM," says Charlie Fischer, AGMA vice president/technical division. "Joe and Jenny have helped put together an education program that continues during the show. Whether you've been in the industry for 20 years or you're just now getting involved, there's a variety of topics and presentations available."

Fischer enjoyed a great response for the FTM call for papers this year and is excited to deliver a variety of technical presentations on spline design, heat treat distortion, an update on new machine tool technology and bearing and gear failure analysis to name a few.

"These are the kind of practical papers our industry likes to see," Fischer says. "Hopefully, we're sending people home with information they can use as soon as they get back to the office."



Additionally, this year's FTM will be broken down into five segments including heat treating, gear manufacturing, gear design, failure analysis and gear drive components. "We welcome attendees to sign up or participate in a single session if they're only interested in certain areas or want information on a particular paper," Fischer adds.

The FTM/Gear Expo event is also pivotal in providing opportunities for up and coming gear engineers. "This has to be one of our priorities moving forward," Fischer says.

Franklin agrees. "We're seeing a huge influx of young engineers in the gear community. Two years ago in Cincinnati, one of the industry's old hands came up to me and said 'Am I in the right place? I don't recognize anybody.' Of course, it's an overstatement, but we're noticing that the gear industry is doing a nice job bringing in younger engineers and sending them to technical and professional events like Gear Expo. This is a good sign for the future and it's important for those already established in the industry to get to know the new talent coming in."



What's New in Indianapolis?

Although Gear Expo is returning to the Indiana Convention Center, the 2013 trade show will look nothing like it did in 2009. "We're utilizing a new section of the convention center. The layout is different and the move brings us a little closer to the restaurant and entertainment district," Blackford says. "Those that attended the 2009 show in Indianapolis will have an entirely new experience in 2013."

Technology is also playing a larger role in 2013 for AGMA. "We're releasing our first mobile app in August, the Gear Expo app. It will be available to Android, iPhone and iPad users and will basically put the show program into the pockets of attendees," Blackford adds. "We're still offering the regular show program, but this mobile app will let you search for a particular exhibitor or product, customize your Expo schedule and let you digitally map what you'd like to accomplish and who you'd like to see."

Social media also has an increased presence at the show. "Twitter updates will be available on digital interactive

displays throughout the show," Blackford adds. Free Wi-Fi will make it easier for visitors to utilize the Gear Expo app and connect with exhibitors and attendees via social media. "With options like this, we feel it will be that much easier to network and increase interaction between visitors and exhibitors."

Once again Gear Expo will be co-located with the ASM Heat Treating Society Conference and Exhibition. In fact, plans are already in place to partner up for the 2015 show. "This has been a very successful collaboration so far and we'd like to continue to work with the ASM in the future," Blackford says.

The joint education course between AGMA and ASM that was well attended in 2011 also returns in 2013. "This course is on gear materials in the morning and heat treatment in the afternoon with three instructors from AGMA and three instructors from ASM," Blackford says.

There will be a total of 24 presentations at the Solutions Center, running each day from 9:30 until an hour before the show ends. Highlights include an

economic forecast, international trade and a session on 3-D technology.

"3-D printing is an interesting topic," says Franklin. "We're not sure exactly where the technology is going and what role it might play in our industry. Some people are interested and others aren't convinced it's going to have an impact. We believe, however, that it's important enough to at least put someone on the stage to talk about it. Our job is to represent all the new technologies and solutions and put them out there if we can."

If you only have one day to come to Indianapolis, Blackford suggests Tuesday, September 17 might be the best bang for your buck.

"You have a great opportunity on Tuesday to pick and choose from a variety of events. You can attend a session or two of the FTM in the morning and spend half the day on the exhibit floor. If you're relatively new to the gear industry, the Training School for Gear Manufacturing takes place on Tuesday as well as the popular economic forecast keynote."

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Year in and year out, AGMA plans its various events based on the feedback it receives from its members and the industry as a whole. "We listen to all suggestions, criticisms and ideas. We try to incorporate these into our events," says Franklin. "It's gratifying for us to see the broad, wide-spread support for Gear Expo year after year."

The Gear Industry Outlook

With access to market forecasters, its own members and other gear industry leaders, AGMA is a great resource to gage the current state of the industry as Gear Expo 2013 draws closer.

"If you're not making automobiles or aerospace components, your business has probably slowed down a bit recently," Franklin says. "Europe is facing a lot of economic difficulties. The demand in China is not there for gear products like it used to be. Most of the action for 2013 and 2014 will be in the United States. While the market forecasters we've talked to suggest the gear industry will be down a couple of percentage points in

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2013, they believe 2014 should be a year of recovery."

With international exhibitors from Europe, China, Japan, India and Australia, attendees will have a unique opportunity at Gear Expo to get some feedback on the global gear market. All in all, gear manufacturing is following the same trends and forecasts as manufacturing in general.

To make the trip to Indianapolis as productive as possible, Franklin goes back to his comments on technology and education. "Visitors will conduct buy-

ing and selling on the show floor, but Gear Expo is really all about learning what's new in the industry. Even if you can't apply some of these things today, you may find something useful that you can implement a year or two from now. This is the real reason to attend. You'll be hard-pressed to find as much new technology (specific to the gear industry) in such a short period of time."

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