

Gears at Play

E-Bay shopping, newspaper reading and excessive e-mailing aren't a problem for most managers in the gear industry, but now there's a new employee distraction headed their way.

"Gears" is an interactive game located on www.shockwave.com and can suck the productivity out of even the most dedicated engineer. Designed like a puzzle, "Gears" is a series of rotating gears that players have to fit together. Players have to use a specific number of large and small gears in a predetermined design space. Part of the challenge is also getting output shafts turning in the right directions. The number of gears and their speeds increase with each level.

On the free version of the game, there are 23 levels. More serious players have the option of subscribing to www.gameblast.com where, for about \$10, they can advance through 50 levels and receive hints.

Andre Persidsky designed the game and obviously can pass through even the most advanced obstacles. But, he's not the only one. "I get e-mails from people all the time, saying they're on the 23rd level and begging for hints. But quite a

few have completed it, despite all the players who say it's impossible."

It's not impossible, but it takes a very left-brained player to succeed at "Gears." The Addendum team attempted this puzzle and actually made it to Level 9, even without paying the fees for the hints, we might add.

Level 9 seems to be a bottleneck for most players, if the posted reviews are to be believed. One player accuses the company of rigging Level 9 to get more paid subscribers.

Other ratings for "Gears" have been mixed. An obvious gear enthusiast named "Circuit hottie" posted her opinion on Sept. 8 on www.shockwave.com, saying "Great puzzles! Very fun to play, especially at work!" On May 16, Razer Blade (who we believe must work in the cutting tools industry) said "Great game for working the mind. It's complex and it bugs you when you finally get the answer...omg, why didn't I think of THAT". 99bottles warns "If you don't want to think, don't play."

Persidsky spent six months creating "Gears," so he obviously wanted players to have to put some thought into their movements. He is a lifelong inven-

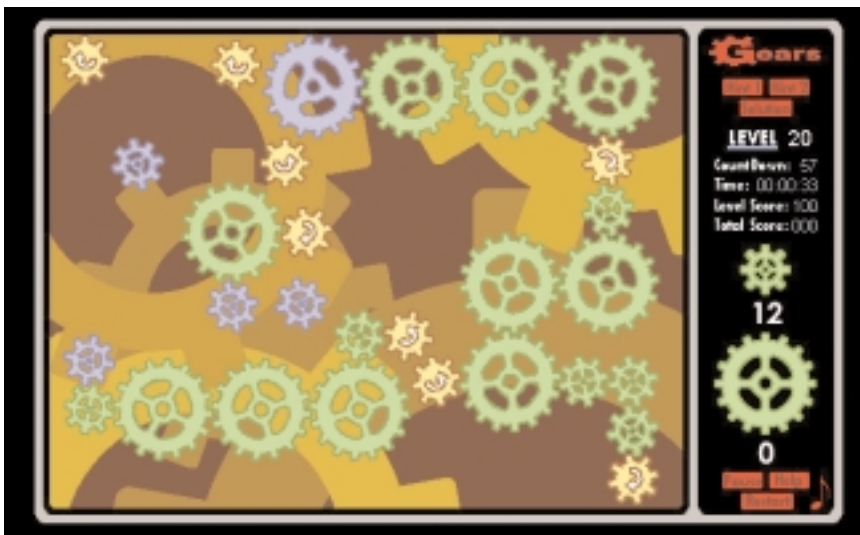
tor and although he has never worked in the manufacturing industry, he now knows more than he ever wanted to about gears. Persidsky was looking for something unique, and rotating gears was a concept in online games he'd never seen before. He created the graphics using Adobe Photoshop and then coordinated the entire program through Director, a tool by Macromedia.

The computer generation portion of the project was easy for Persidsky, an expert on multimedia software who authored the books *Macromedia Dreamweaver MX for Windows and Macintosh*, *Director 8 for Windows and Macintosh* and *Ray Dream Studio 5 for Windows and Macintosh*.

His writing career has awarded Persidsky the freedom to pursue his passion for Internet games, since the cyberworld still isn't very lucrative. "There's not much money out there in online games unless you have 50 out there. 'Gears' was a high performer and it's gotten my name out and I've found more work that way," he says.

These online games all are created through Onward Designs, Persidsky's company. Among his current projects are a top-secret game using word puzzles, which also will be listed on www.shockwave.com.

That one probably won't be so popular with gear guys, which is a positive because it's one less distraction at work. The good news with "Gears"?—you can always tell the boss you're just honing those design skills. ⚙



Only the elite of the gearing world ever see this screen in one of the three highest levels.

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