

Meeting of the Minds

One of the great benefits of Gear Expo for us here at *Gear Technology* is the opportunity to meet face-to-face with many of the people who, in one way or another, contribute to our success throughout the year. After all, our success is dependent almost entirely on information and the people who provide it. These contributors include researchers at top technical universities, the heads of technology at major gear industry corporations, independent consultants with decades of gear industry experience, members and volunteers at leading industry organizations like the AGMA, our technical editors and others. These are the people who facilitate the continuing education of the gear industry. They are the knowledge providers who give you the tools you need to make better gears, more efficiently, and at higher profit. Very often, we are able to give you the advantage of their knowledge and experience through the articles in our magazine.

During Gear Expo, we were pleased to host a dinner for many of these contributors. The guest list was a veritable Who's Who of the intellectual gear industry. As one attendee commented, "Never in my 46 years of being in the gear industry have I been a part of a group as experienced and knowledgeable about the design and manufacture of gears — ever."

More importantly, the event provided a very informal, social environment for people from different (and sometimes competing) organizations to spend time with one another and share ideas. The attendees all knew of each other, but they didn't necessarily all know each other. But now they do, both professionally and personally. Gears were certainly discussed, but so were a wide variety of other topics, in multiple languages, all at the same time. Perhaps the greatest measure of this event's success was that throughout the dinner, every time I looked up, everyone was engaged in lively conversation.

For a short time, anyway, I felt like I was at the center of the gear universe.

Creating and maintaining contacts like these helps us continue to fulfill our role as "The Gear Industry's Information Source."

Another way we build on that role is by continuing to expand our information offerings to you, the gear community. At Gear Expo, we did so by presenting the first ever live and in-person sessions of "Ask the Expert." At our booth, we hosted four sessions, with three or four renowned experts in each session. The topics were "gear grinding," "cutting tools," "gear design" and "ask anything."

Some of the foremost authorities in the world were among our experts during the live sessions, and they attracted a crowd to our booth throughout the show. Even though I've been in the gear manufacturing industry for more than 50 years, I was delighted by the expertise of the presenters and the sophistication and depth of their responses. Many of our panelists are only available during a show like this on a very limited basis, often only to the largest of customers. To have them all together



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and be available to the industry at large was truly a first in our industry. Please see the article on page 92 for a rundown of the sessions, including the names and titles of the panelists, the questions asked and where to go online to view each of the video-recorded sessions.

The excitement we carried back home from Gear Expo was about more than just our own experiences at the show. Even outside our own activities, it was one of the best shows in recent memories. Foot traffic was good, and many exhibitors reported that the attendees came to the show with specific requirements, and orders were received. We heard similar reports out of EMO in September. So the anecdotal evidence, at least, points to a reasonably healthy gear industry for the immediate future.

The empirical evidence might be a little more mixed, as you'll see in our annual State of the Gear Industry survey results (page 26). As many of you are aware, there are major segments of the gear manufacturing community — namely mining and energy — that are less than robust, while others — like automobiles and aircraft — are rolling along like a precision ground gear. According to the survey results, the American gear industry seems to be in decent shape, with the overall level of optimism about the same as last year.

But there are pockets of trouble, to be sure. In particular, our respondents outside North America were decidedly more pessimistic this year, and many respondents continue to express concerns about the difficulty in finding skilled labor.

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