

Gear Expo 99 Wrap-up

Many people seem to be counting this year's Gear Expo in Nashville as a resounding success. There were 180 American and international exhibitors occupying over 50,000 square feet of exhibit space in the Nashville Convention Center, with total attendance of 2,700. This figure is dramatically down from past shows but that doesn't seem to be an issue with the show organizers. According to Kurt Medert, vice president of AGMA's Administrative Division, even though attendance was off from the 1997 show, the exhibitors were pleased with the quality of the people who did come to the show. "This was an excellent show for us," said Marty Woodhouse, vice president of sales for Star Cutter Company and chairman of AGMA's Gear Expo committee. "Our customer base was there and they came to buy. It was very active."

Others were not so positive. At the show, the editors of *Gear Technology* heard from a number of exhibitors who were unsatisfied with the quantity and the quality of the attendees and the people who ran the registration. Still, these were quiet grumblings and they have not stopped AGMA from declaring Gear Expo 99 a great success.

While it is also true that there were fewer machines on the floor this year than in the past, the range of products on display was still impressive. Visitors saw everything from forging and blanking to surface enhancement, from testing to failure analysis, and from traditional cut gears to the latest technology in plastic, powder metallurgy, near-net and net-shaped gears. Machine tools, measurement systems, manufacturing accessories and a variety of services were also on display, occupying nearly every available foot of floor space in the Nashville Convention Center.


People came to Gear Expo from 45 states and 26 foreign countries (10% of the attendees) with the bulk of the show's attendance coming from the manufacturing belt—Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and Pennsylvania. In total, 1,262 companies were represented at the show by 2,700 people, coming in either as exhibitors or as attendees. That is more companies but fewer people, a situation that Medert says may have more to do with the location and the economy than anything else. "In Detroit we get just as many solid attendees as we did in Nashville," said Medert, commenting on the numbers. "But we also get additional people and that adds to the numbers." With the economy being a little off, he added, companies are sending fewer people to the show. "A lot of companies were represented by just one person," he said.

One of the things AGMA learned this time around was the extent and importance of exhibitor-to-exhibitor contact at the show. "You've got the exhibitors selling to the people who attend, and you've got the exhibitors selling to each other," said Medert. "Gear Expo is a unique event as industrial trade shows go because of its special focus on gearing. It is two shows in one, Gear manufacturers on the one hand and suppliers to the industry on the other. There is as much buying and selling going on between exhibitors as there is between exhibitors and the people who attend the show. This reinforces the notion that the exhibitors are each other's customers."

Along with the show, the Gear Processing and Manufacturing Clinic, sponsored by the Society of Manufacturing Engineers, was held. The Clinic was actually a series of events covering topics from heat treating and gear hardening to gear metrology, gear processing and manufacturing. Under this last were lectures covering near-net vs. far-net shape gear applications, high-speed steel for gear cutting tools, shaving, broaching, honing and CNC gear inspection. "We had a registered attendance of about 150 people," said Lynn Albertson, the program administrator for SME's conferencing division. "Overall, we felt the Clinic went really well and that the exposition was extremely well done."

This excitement and overall approval of the show and the related events is reflected in the number of exhibitor reservations AGMA has already received for Gear Expo 2001. A month after the close of Gear Expo 99, AGMA has received commitments from 90 companies for 37,000 square feet of exhibit space in Detroit's Cobo Center for Gear Expo 2001. This is a 28% increase over the number of commitments made after the 1997 Gear Expo.

While this is a sign of growth in the show itself, the organizers would like to see more attendees as well. Gear Expo 2001 will be at in Detroit, and until recently, the 2003 show had been planned for Charlotte, North Carolina. That was the site discussed at the post-show exhibitor's meeting. However, according to Medert, there is only a letter of intent with Charlotte and AGMA is looking at other cities that are a little closer to the manufacturing belt, places like Milwaukee, Columbus and Pittsburgh. "Charlotte won't happen," Medert said, "too far East, too far South."

Gear Expo 2001 will run October 7-10, 2001. "Detroit is into a positive movement," said Medert, referring to the recent upgrades the city has made to its downtown infrastructure and facilities. "We are looking forward to going back." For more information about the show or to reserve booth space call AGMA at (703) 684-0211. 

Tell Us What You Think . . .

If you found this article of interest and/or useful, please circle 203.

For more information about Gear Expo, please circle 204.



Gear Expo 99 at the Nashville Convention Center.