

2001: A (Cyber) Space Odyssey

In 1968, Stanley Kubrick released the film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, based on the story by Arthur C. Clarke. Back then, 2001 was a long way off. It was the future, a time of unknown marvels, amazing discoveries and technological achievements. Now we're in 2001. But while Clarke's and Kubrick's visions of 2001 took place in *outer space*, what captures my imagination this year is *cyberspace*.

I'd like to share my enthusiasm for the power and potential of the Internet. I've noticed that many gear company owners and managers are apprehensive about the Internet's effects on their businesses. Will the Internet collapse their market? Is business-to-business online purchasing the way to go, or is it going to put them out of business? Like the famous monoliths in *2001*, the Internet can be a source of confusion, mystery and anxiety.

One reason the Internet causes confusion is that it's constantly changing, being reinvented and improved, but that continual rebirth is actually one of the Internet's strengths. Once you discover the Internet's potential, the confusion and anxiety give way to an understanding and appreciation of its power and benefits.

I've been astonished over the years by the growth in traffic on our two Websites. Back in 1996, when we launched *The Gear Industry Home Page*™, the Website received 3,000 page requests in its first month. Today, the two Websites together receive nearly 200,000 page requests per month. Something seems to be working, and many of you have told us that you're finding these Websites to be among the fastest and easiest that you've used and that you can quickly find what you want.

Also, as the Internet evolves, Websites are able to provide richer, more complex and more useful information. In fact, on page 41 of this issue, you can read about some companies that developed technology to allow their customers to design gears or receive training on the Internet with nothing more than a Web browser. We're also starting to see more and more use of multimedia, including audio and video.

Some of our advertisers will be using video this year as part of the upcoming *Show Central* on *The Gear Industry Home Page*™. As in 1999, we will transform the real Gear Expo into an electronic expo. *Show Central* will be a meeting place where you'll be able not only to read about the show, but also to see and hear some products in action. If you plan to exhibit at Gear Expo in Detroit, *Show Central* is a great opportunity to demonstrate your products and services with video and sound to gear industry buyers not able to attend the real expo. Look for *Show Central*'s launch in May.

But *Show Central* and videos are only part of the Internet picture. One of the most valuable aspects of the Internet is its interactivity, which has allowed *Gear Technology* to create two successful Websites—focused places for buyers and sellers of

gear equipment and power transmission products to meet, gather information and exchange ideas.

Visitors come every day to *powertransmission.com*™ searching for manufacturers of gears and other power transmission components, such as motors, bearings and speed reducers, or to *The Gear Industry Home Page*™ to find the suppliers of gear machine tools, gear cutting tools, inspection equipment, workholding devices and gear manufacturing services. With a few clicks, they can narrow their search based on product type and specification and easily send an e-mail message to all the suppliers that interest them. The visitor often receives responses from those companies in minutes or hours instead of days, weeks or months.



We've built the Websites on a model that tries to connect the buyers and sellers of gear-related products without getting in their way. Many industrial Websites offer services such as auctions and electronic commerce. While those other models may work for some industries, the time is just not right for ours. The products that most of you buy and sell are highly engineered, and customers often have to visit their potential suppliers' facilities and research the products before placing an order. Today, the Internet's best use is as a facilitator, bringing together someone who has a need with potential suppliers.

The Internet's power grows daily, its potential is nearly limitless, and it will continue to evolve. As the Internet changes, we'll be able to conduct more and more of our business online.

Visit our Websites to see how you can use this medium to contact suppliers and find potential suppliers of the products and services you buy. See how other companies are using the technology to communicate with their customers and potential customers. See which of your competitors are already there, reaching the customers who buy your products. Can you afford not to be there?

However you fit into the gear industry, we've created a place in cyberspace for you in 2001 as visitor, advertiser or both.

Michael Goldstein

Michael Goldstein, Publisher and Editor-in-Chief