

Transferring Tribal Knowledge

Our annual *State of the Gear Industry* survey (published last issue) once again revealed that the difficulty of finding skilled labor remains one of our industry's most pressing concerns. This is not a surprise, nor is it really news.

Most everyone realizes that we're dealing with an aging manufacturing and engineering workforce, and as those employees with the most knowledge and experience retire—either to sunnier climes, or to that great machine shop in the sky—their knowledge and experience go with them.

We're also dealing with a workforce that's far more mobile than ever before. People change cities or even countries for the right opportunity. They'll also take a job across the street if it pays a little more. Many companies deal with the problem of lost knowledge and experience by simply hiring it away from their competitors. And while this might slow the bleeding at your company, it exacerbates the problem at somebody else's, and it certainly doesn't help the industry as a whole.

What we need, then, is education. Not just a one-time effort, but a concerted, continuous effort to invest in our employees—both young and old—in order to pass on and continue to grow our industry's knowledge.

Last issue, AGMA President Matt Croson told you about some of the new seminars and other educational initiatives the association is putting together. One of the new courses, "Fundamentals of Gear Design and Analysis," takes place April 19–21 in Indianapolis. Another, "Steels for Gear Applications," will be offered October 4–6 in Alexandria, VA. A complete list of AGMA educational offerings is available at www.agma.org.

Of course, there are also gear schools and seminars offered by many of the major gear machine tool suppliers. The Gleason Gear School at Gleason Cutting Tools in Loves Park, IL, is scheduled for April 10–13, June 12–15, August 7–10, October 9–12 and December 4–7 this year. The Koepfer Gear School will be held May 23–25 in St. Charles, IL. There are always plenty of educational events like these listed in our events calendar at www.geartechnology.com.

Also, Arvin Global Solutions just held its first ever gear seminar in March, and from what I hear, it was a resounding success. "An Introduction to Gear Process Engineering" took place March 7–9 in Naperville, IL. Presenters at the seminar included industry veterans Matt Mondek, Bruce Roberge, Mike Steele, Al Swiglo, Kevin Walsh and our own technical editor and resident blogger, Chuck Schultz. You can read a little bit about the seminar in his blog posts "Shared Knowledge" and "Why Not Teach" (www.geartechnology.com/blog).

Here at *Gear Technology*, we believe very strongly in educa-



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tion. It is, after all, the core of what we do. Although we don't host the type of seminars these other organizations present, we do offer educational technical articles, and columns like "Ask the Expert." More than 10,000 visitors per month come to the *Gear Technology* Library to learn from the more than 2,100 technical and feature articles in our archive.

Also, I'm pleased to announce that we'll be hosting the second installment of "Ask the Expert Live" at Gear Expo in Columbus. We had a great turnout at our event in 2015, both in terms of experts on our panel and show visitors who stopped to listen. I strongly recommend you view last year's sessions to see not only the quality of the presenters, but also the questions asked and the depth of answers given, so you can think about what questions you'd like to ask our experts this year. Check out the videos by visiting www.geartechnology.com/videos. You'll hear from some of the top technical gurus at Gleason, Klingelnberg, Liebherr, Star-SU, FZG and more.

We're busy putting together a similar lineup of experts and topics for "Ask the Expert Live" at Gear Expo 2017. Having all of these experts gathered in one place is rare, and having them ready to answer your questions is rarer still, so I invite you to submit your gear-related technical questions to senior editor Jack McGuinn (jmcguinn@geartechnology.com). And if you come to Gear Expo, I hope you'll come ask your questions in person as well as learn from the answers to others' questions.

We all know that manufacturing is no longer an industry fueled by strong backs and arms. Machines and technology are increasingly doing the work, and these are driven by knowledge and experience. Not investing in them is done at your peril.

So whatever you do, please take advantage of as much education as you're able. If you're in a management position, don't forget that educating and training your employees is an investment in your company that will pay off in terms of increased productivity, quality and profitability.

Investing in iron is only one part of your future success. Investing in knowledge and experience is every bit as important. In fact, it's imperative for your success, for the success of our industry, and the success of our nation that our tribal knowledge be passed on to future generations.