

Cool Kids in Tractors

Everybody's making electric cars these days. Luxury cars, sports cars, even trucks. And demand for them isn't going to slow anytime soon, thanks to their better fuel efficiency, lower emissions, reduced noise and overall environmental friendliness.

But there's another factor, too. An electric vehicle is also a status symbol. To own one is to make a personal statement. In the early 2000s, that statement was mostly about environmental consciousness, when the Toyota Prius became the vehicle of choice for politically correct celebrities and tree-huggers alike. And while reducing carbon emissions is still an important factor in the demand for electric cars, it's probably not the most significant. Today's electric vehicles have come a long way in terms of performance, technology, styling and sophistication, to the point where the cars are as much cutting-edge tech gadgets as they are transportation. Owning a Tesla has become akin to owning an iPhone back in the day. Only the cool kids had them.

So, the demand is going to keep growing.

Which means the automotive industry will keep transforming.

Which means the rest of manufacturing will follow as the technologies become more ubiquitous.

As a result, electrification has become the No. 1 trend in manufacturing, not just in the automotive industry, but throughout the manufacturing world. And although the automotive industry gets all the press, it's not just cars getting amped up with batteries and motors. Electrification is also making serious inroads in surprising places, like the diesel- and hydraulics-dominated off-highway industry.

I mean, who wouldn't prefer to drive a tractor with a giant tablet-style touch screen, especially one that's quieter and lets you connect your phone via Bluetooth. Pretty soon, it's what all the cool farm kids will be driving.



In this issue, we take a look at some of the trends and technologies actually being implemented in off-highway and other vehicles. In the article "An Underground Conversion in Mining" (p. 24), for example, we see Freudenberg and MacLean partnering to create battery-electric equipment to support many mining companies' commitment to become carbon neutral over the coming decades.

The article "Electric Integration" (p. 28) from ABM Drives presents examples of electrification in vehicles as diverse as off-road sports cars and three-wheeled postal delivery vehicles that can handle the snowy, slippery conditions of the Swiss Alps.

Senior Editor Matt Jaster explores the mobile machinery market in detail with his article, "Transforming the Drivetrain" (p. 34). In the article, experts from Bosch Rexroth describe how a traditionally mechanical and hydraulic industry is embracing electrification.

Of course, there's plenty more in the issue, so we hope you spend some time looking through our extensive product news, industry news and technical sections. As always, we appreciate you spending some of your valuable time with us. More importantly, we appreciate your feedback. Drop me a line at stott@agma.org to share your thoughts and comments on the issue or any of its articles.

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