



A History of Motion + Power

MPT Expo celebrates gear and power transmission innovation

Matthew Jaster, Senior Editor

The first Gear Expo featured 22 exhibitors at the 1986 Fall Technical Meeting in Chicago. It was billed as the “AGMA Fall Technical Meeting & Gearing Exhibition” and provided attendees the opportunity to learn the latest technical advances, state of gear research and gear design. The show highlighted machine tool, software and processing exhibitors to meet the ever-changing needs of the gear industry.

The original plan was to hold the Exposition annually, so the following year saw a giant bump from 22 to 130+ exhibitors in Cincinnati in 1987. Nearly 1,200 people from 39 U.S. states and 16 foreign countries attended the Expo. The most talked about feature was the live machinery on the show floor—attendees didn’t just receive a sales pitch as they walked the exhibit hall, they could see the latest gear manufacturing technology live and in-person, a huge draw for years to come.

“Welcome to Gear Expo 1987. As you can see by looking around you, the need to create a show exclusively for the gear industry was a real one. We felt that the industry deserved its own marketplace to demonstrate its new technology under one roof,” said Joe Arvin, president, Arrow Gear and chairman of the AGMA’s Product Division in 1987.

After the 1987 Gear Expo, the AGMA decided to make the show a biennial event—taking place in a variety of cities across the Midwest every other year.

AGMA’s Gear Expo 1989 came with a tagline, “The Cutting Edge.” The show opened at the David Lawrence Convention Center in Pittsburgh, PA. This year’s show

was dubbed “the largest trade show ever conceived specifically for the gear industry.” The show was 60 percent larger in terms of floor space and offered gear manufacturers and suppliers to the gear industry a specialized forum to display their products. Among the products and services on display were grinders, hobbers, cutting tools, shapers, milling machines, testing equipment, filtration, lubricants, broaching machines and heat treating. The 1989 Gear Expo featured an 1850s era, working gear cutting machine courtesy of the E. Gould & Company.

The 1991 Gear Expo took place in Detroit with the tagline, “The World of Gearing” with topics on 3D contact analysis, gear tooth friction, gear stress distribution, oil jet gear lubrication and low-noise marine gears. *Gear*



Technology had a booth along with American Pfauter, American Oerlikon, Fellows Corporation, Klingelnberg and Bourn & Koch to name a few. By this time, technical papers and FTM presentations were proving advantageous to all attendees.

“As they have since our founding, technical standards continue to be the glue that holds several hundred companies and individuals together for our common and mutual good and the spark that opens doors to new opportunities for AGMA and the gear industry,” said AGMA President Joe Franklin in the 1993 September/October issue of the *AGMA News Digest*.

AGMA was changing strategies to expand globally. In general, gear demand significantly increased between 1992 and 1998. By 1997, AGMA was exhibiting at the International Power Transmission and Control Show in Hannover, Germany and had begun attending Eurotrans meetings across Europe.

The 1999 Gear Expo selected Nashville as the host city long before the rest of the world flocked to Tennessee for bachelorette parties or the vibrant secret music scene. The 1999 Gear Expo displayed the latest gear machine technology but also focused on the latest metalworking processes found across manufacturing. This hinted at the changing needs of shop floors. Job shops were taking orders for open gearing as well as providing components for full systems.

“One of the reasons AGMA has been successful over our 95-year history is that the association’s agenda, programs and activities reflect the voice of our members. The board of directors, advisory committees and councils and the staff vigilantly review programs and vet them with members for needed changes, updates or cancellation. The organization today is much changed from what it was in 1987, a decade ago, even a year ago,” Franklin said in 2011.

A Collaborative Future

New content for the 2005 show in Detroit included the Gear Expo Solutions Center, an on-floor educational exhibit where companies could give 20-minute presentations free to attendees. The Forging Industry Association and Forging Defense Manufacturing Consortium also presented a seminar on “Gear Forging Solutions,” and the ABMA held a seminar on “Bearing Design and Application.” Other industries were coming to Gear Expo and putting a greater

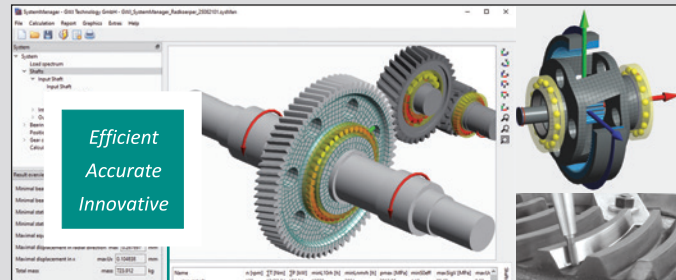
emphasis on technologies and processes to enhance gear and power transmission applications.

In 2009, AGMA began holding Gear Expo in conjunction with the ASM Heat Treating Society Conference and Exposition. The U.S. Department of Commerce selected Gear Expo for certification as one of its International Buyer Trade Shows that year. Embassies around the world encouraged their commercial officers to bring interested delegations to Gear Expo. The Indianapolis show featured an international center on-site with representatives from the U.S. Commercial Service to help exhibitors and attendees benefit from increased exports of products represented at the show.

As the 2015 show opened its doors in Detroit, Gear Expo aimed to cover the entire gear system—from pre-production to end users. The tagline “Drive Technology Show” hinted at these subtle changes. This very magazine, *Gear Technology*, used 30+ pages of its September/October issue to take an in-depth look at the technology displayed on the show floor. This included everything from power skiving and gear cutting technologies to analytical gear inspection and new coating and tooling strategies.

Motion + Power Potential

AGMA was now ready to move into the next chapter with its biennial trade show. Gear Expo transformed into the Motion + Power Technology Expo for the 2019 show in Detroit. The tagline “Gear, Electric, Fluid Power: Moving the Future,” brought the latest demands for efficiency and power density



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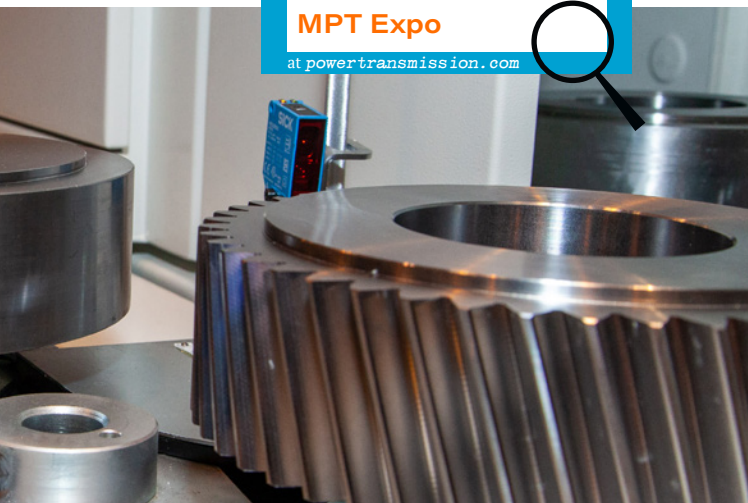
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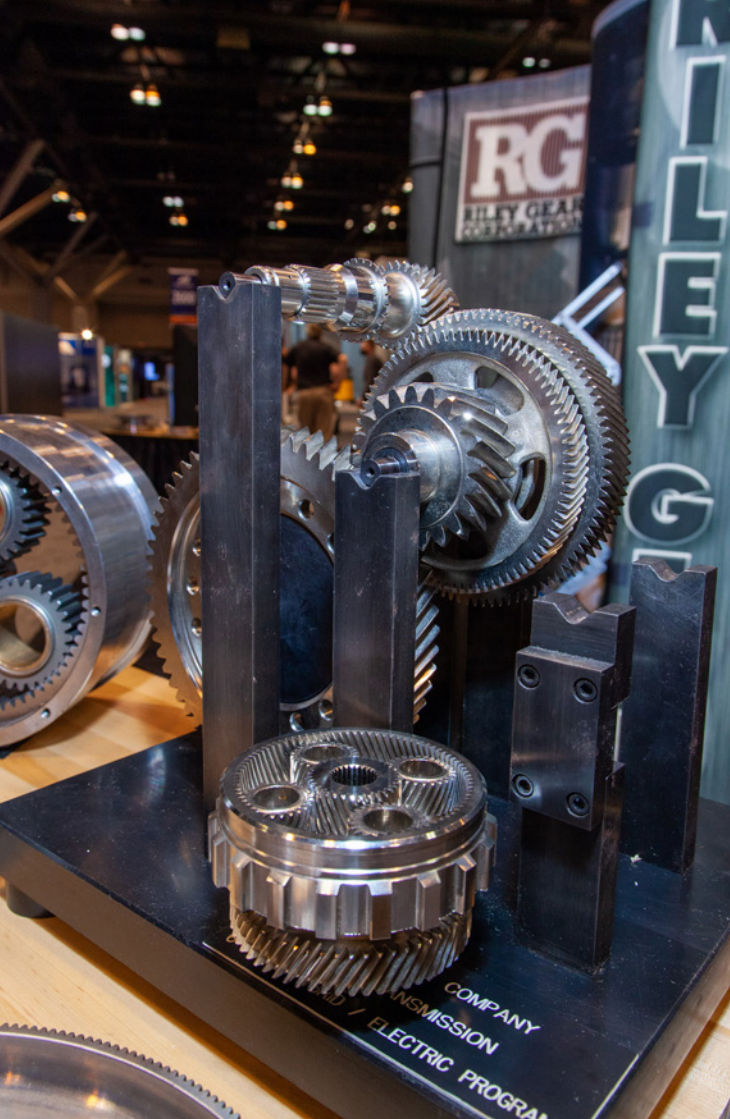
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Editors Note: Material for this article was provided by past issues of *Gear Technology*, *PTE* and "Celebrating 100 Years of Gearing."

In April 2025, AGMA/ABMA membership voted to approve a merger between the American Gear Manufacturers Association (AGMA) and the American Bearing Manufacturers Association (ABMA), creating the Motion + Power Manufacturers Alliance (MPMA). The new organizational structure began on May 1, 2025.

The MPMA will deliver increased value through standards creation under the AGMA and ABMA brands, more robust education and workforce development programs, a strong connection of the supply chain via face-to-face events, two industry publications, and advocacy at the Federal government.

"The creation of the MPMA comes at a crucial time in our industry, where we are seeing a growth in gearing and bearing sales, and a consolidation of the companies that create these mechanical power solutions," said Sara Zimmerman, MPMA chair and vice president of customer experience and product, Sumitomo Machinery Corporation of America. "I look forward to working closely with Vice Chair Matt Frady from Dodge Industrial, and the entire board of directors as we forge a new path for this dynamic industry."

The Motion + Power Technology Expo 2025 is doubling down on these efforts. MPT Expo will feature more than 150 of the world's leading gear companies, machine tool suppliers, and electric drive solutions providers, including Timken Power Systems, Meritor, EMAG LLC, Gleason Corporation, Kapp Group, Nidec Machine Tool America and others. Attendees will see manufacturing processes and experience the latest product technologies and machine demonstrations firsthand.

Think Big, Not Safe

The evolution of the Motion + Power Technology Expo is noteworthy. The show and its diverse team of talent has come a long way from 22 tabletop exhibits at the FTM in Chicago back in 1986. The Expo has made a strong case for innovation and expansion by focusing on gear and PT systems. Technology and industry growth will always be the show's focal point.

Gear Technology's former resident author summed it up best in an article about the changes facing companies involved in gears, bearings, motors, etc.

"Many wonderful opportunities are coming in alternative energy, environmental remediation, electric vehicles and infrastructure revitalization. Think big, not safe. When challenged, get the team together and brainstorm ways to reach that price point, to make that deadline, to figure out new ways to accomplish a better result. Don't settle for being the last vendor standing in a dying market segment," stated Charles Schultz, from a blog on the *Gear Technology* website.

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front and center and added mechanical, fluid power, electric and hybrid technologies to the mix. This was no longer a show just about gears, this was a show about how these markets were rapidly changing with electrification, automation, additive manufacturing and robotic technologies.

"The event has evolved into the Motion + Power Technology Expo, becoming much more than just a trade show. MPT Expo has grown into a one-stop educational, networking and buying event, and it's expanding its reach into other types of power transmission products as well," said *Gear Technology* Publisher Michael Goldstein at the time. "The business track will include topics such as cybersecurity, supply chain and workforce development, while the emerging technology track will include seminars on 3D printing, electric drives, IIoT and robotics."

The 2023 show in Detroit kept both the gear and power transmission sectors informed on the latest information on gear design, heat treating, electric vehicles, automation for job shops, workforce development and future insights into where these industries were heading.

"MPT Expo was truly where the gears were and we were pleased with the attendance and all the events that were part of this great show," said Matthew E. Croson, president, AGMA. "Detroit is a great town for MPT Expo and drew the quality of attendee for which we are known."