



# AGMA

## The Gear Industry's Learning Center and Resource

*Readers of our sister publication, Gear Technology, are perhaps more familiar with the American Gear Manufacturers Association (AGMA) than our PTE audience. Now more than 90 years old, AGMA continues to thrive as a global, relevant go-to resource and service provider—from metrology to tribology—for its more than 400 worldwide members. PTE put some questions regarding AGMA—now, and going forward—to AGMA president Joe T. Franklin, Jr.*

**PTE:** The Internet is an ever-growing trove of technical data, educational opportunities and other gear industry-related information. How do industry associations such as AGMA market themselves in order to demonstrate their continued relevance and to grow membership?

**Franklin:** The Internet is certainly a valuable tool that leads all of us to the depth and variety of information, making it a real productivity-enhancing tool. We know from a variety of sources that our members and others in the industry really do save time with the Internet; it allows us to be much better prepared before we enter a meeting or visit a trade show than anything before it. However, AGMA is much more for our members than a source of information or a library.

AGMA is, of course, an excellent source of technical and business information that our members and others in the industry use to stay current with their design, manufacture and business issues. But these are not the main reasons companies join and continue to be members of the association.

Manufacturers in our industry become members of AGMA for three main reasons—access, credibility and voice. Access means connections, the networking opportunities that members of AGMA, almost uniquely, have in this industry. Access is the ability to meet with other like-minded technical and engineering staff in the development of new industry standards. Access is the ability for business managers to tour each other's plants and to discuss noncompetitive—but very valuable—information in a safe environment. Access is one of the primary ways that knowledge is transferred in our industry.

Companies that join AGMA enjoy an increasing credibility, from the first time they include the AGMA logo on their letterhead or in their product material on their website. Their customers know that our members regularly get the most current technical information and the most valid comparative

business information of anyone in the world.

The issue of credibility is not limited to smaller companies. Not long ago, at an industry meeting, some of the most respected and largest companies in our industry specifically commented that they benefited from enhanced credibility in the eyes of the customers because of their membership in (AGMA). These executives talked about experiences they had had working with customers and how they had used the fact that their engineers sat at the table where technical standards were developed.

And the final reason companies join and renew their membership is summed up in the word 'voice.' Anyone truly familiar with the association knows that AGMA's agenda is set by our members.

In example after example, it is easy to see new programs that we've started and new directions that we've taken, all because one or two members took the initiative to make a suggestion or request. The gear training school that we hold at (Chicago's) Daley College is one example of an excellent program started in the early 1990s because a small group of members recognized that the pool of trained workers was declining. Instead of complaining or pointing fingers at others who were not doing their jobs, members of AGMA decided to build a school to train workers so that we would all benefit. The school has been a tremendous success. Most of the other advanced engineering seminars that we teach came directly

continued



from other ideas submitted by members. The business reports that we produce are all the result of requests from our members.

Unfortunately, just as the Internet helps improve productivity, it also is a major source of data without meaning or context. Fortunately, through AGMA, our members use their access and voice to turn data to information and information to knowledge. As a result, their credibility grows.

**PTE: With the oft-chronicled state of the gear, power transmission and motion control industries' graying ownership, management and workforce issues, how particularly important today is the work of AGMA's Future Leaders Council?**

**Franklin:** What began two years ago as the Future Leaders Council has matured into a self-directed group of younger managers in the industry now named the Strategic Resources Network. After a few meetings, they recognized the strength of their group and the fact that not everyone in it wanted to be a "leader" in AGMA. They did want the benefits of participating in this council and ultimately viewed themselves as a network of resources, so they adopted the name Strategic Resources Network. This is a group that came out of a strategic planning session and was formally launched at the 2006 Annual Meeting. Since that time, they have been going through the typical growing pains of establishing their mission, identity, leadership and member base.

The participants in the network have a clear vision and understanding of who they are, what they want to accomplish and how that relates to AGMA. This is best represented by the chart that they created to show these interrelationships (See Fig. 1). Secondly, based on what they have created to define themselves, they have really demonstrated why they have grown to be key individuals within their organizations and why they will be the core contributors to not only their companies, but to the industry.

The thoughtfulness and skill with which they arrived at this is reflected in their name change to the Strategic Resource Network. This new name more clearly conveys the breadth of the members that they see playing key roles in the gear industry as we look to the future. Also, AGMA members should look within their own organizations for those individuals you view as being key contributors to the future of your company. They may benefit by participation in this new and exciting group. (Editor's Note: For more information on the Strategic Resource Network, please visit [www.agma.org](http://www.agma.org) to view AGMA's Power Point presentation.)

**PTE: What are the major issues facing AGMA through the rest of the decade?**

**Franklin:** One of the strongest characteristics of AGMA's

board of directors is their tendency to look at the big picture—large issues that our industry faces—and then challenging the association to develop and implement solutions. Analyzing the industry from a variety of perspectives gives the board an excellent handle on current affairs and anticipated issues.

One of the major issues facing the industry is the recruitment and training of suitable workers for the industry. The other major issue facing manufacturers and members of AGMA today is how to remain competitive as our national commitment to manufacturing declines.

In the early 90s, several of our members recognized that the traditional pool of workers was getting thin. In far too many cases, trained and skilled employees were simply not available. The solution was for AGMA to create its own training school for gear manufacturing. Today we run (the aforementioned) gear school at Daley College, one of the city colleges of Chicago and an exemplary technical school focusing on manufacturing. That single step became the first of a number of programs that now constitute a substantial body of educational programs available to the industry.

Over the years, hundreds of operators and others in the industry have gone through the school in Chicago, where they've learned not only the theory of gearing, but—because of the hands-on laboratory—also had an opportunity to make their first gear.

While most of the students in the school are machine operators, with that a substantial number of sales engineers, advertising representatives and presidents of several companies have gone through the school. All who have taken this course are more valuable to the industry than when they first began.

AGMA also offers a variety of other ways to get the industry's employees trained and educated. We have expanded our education programs—again driven by requests from our members—into more advanced areas. (They include) gear and gearbox failure analysis courses; advanced gear design, and one in forensic analysis of gear and bearing failure. We have courses available on-line, or instructors will bring a course to your plant.

AGMA's business-oriented seminars, meetings and proprietary studies and surveys are intended to help all of our members to be more competitive. Our board has identified additional ways of helping members, and we will be introducing new programs in 2008.

Manufacturing is a key part of all industrialized economies and plays an important role in a developing country's future. I think we will see AGMA taking a bigger role in the promotion of manufacturing in all of our countries in the next year.

**PTE: What assistance, insights or other benefits can AGMA provide for gear buyers?**

**Franklin:** AGMA is anything but a provincial organi-

zation; we welcome every aspect of the gear manufacturing process into our membership. Of course, gear manufacturers make up the largest portion of our membership. But we also have suppliers of machine tools, other equipment, raw materials, manufacturing processes and service providers as members. Users (buyers) of gears are an especially important part of the membership.

Buyers/users of gears join AGMA for several reasons. First, since only members can participate on the committees that draft the technical standards, users understand the importance of participating in the full process. They are able to make their requirements and objectives known as well as bringing the practical side of manufacturing to the discussion.

In turn their ultimate customers have the confidence that their supplier—the gear buyer—is up to date on the latest technical developments and requirements. AGMA membership enhances their credibility.

Participation with their suppliers puts the buyers in the strongest possible position as they can constantly evaluate their current partners and see, first hand, who else is in that market. As they say, knowledge is power.

Finally, since AGMA's members include both gear manufacturers and the suppliers to the manufacturers, gear buyers have the ability through their networking and friendships in AGMA to look at their decision to buy gears and ask whether they should move from a buyer to a manufacturer. Participation allows them to do the make-buy calculation quietly and with full information.

**PTE: Why should a gear buyer care whether his supplier is an AGMA member or not?**

**Franklin:** Buyers should be concerned, and we know many are. It is not uncommon for a non-member company to call, asking, “How quickly can I get a membership certificate?”

The reason is many large engineering projects require that the suppliers of gearing be members of AGMA. Why is that? Essentially it comes back to a word I used earlier—credibility. These buyers know that AGMA members have open access to the best technical thinking in the business. All members receive all AGMA technical standards and information sheets as they are published. Active members regularly participate on the committees where the industry's experts gather to develop the best current knowledge on a variety of manufacturing topics and processes.

Members have regular access, through their informal networks, to evaluations of machine tools and to the latest process knowledge and manufacturing techniques. There is simply no way someone out of touch with the industry can keep up.

Smart buyers know that when one of their suppliers has the AGMA logo on their materials and web site, the likelihood of a positive result is greatly increased. 

**For more information:**

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