



2006 PMPA National Technical Conference — “Best Practices Driving Change”

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Benchmark To Success With Tomorrow’s Vision

PMPA’s 2006 National Technical Conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency hotel in Dearborn, Michigan, from Saturday, April 29 through Tuesday, May 2. American sporting legend Ted Nugent will deliver the keynote address with his personal firebrand version of “Best Practice.” With more than 30 million albums sold and more media face time than most active politicians, Mr. Nugent has earned his status as an American icon.



The theme of this year’s conference is “Best Practices Driving Change.” Content will be delivered by a number of shops that have implemented best-practice solutions in a variety of technical, quality and management areas.

“Benchmarking” was the word in mind when this program was

defined. Measurement, analysis and improvement of processes should be conducted in order to establish appropriate priorities for an organization. Good business practices and quality standards identify benchmarking as a key input for any company’s improvement efforts.

single area such as the shop, tool room, quality department or office personnel. The Technical Program Committee has developed content for this event based on a “track programming” concept. Shop employees, technical and quality personnel, and top management champions will benefit.

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PMPA’s Technical Program Committee recognizes the importance of benchmarking, but emphasizes the need to act on data in order to facilitate improvement. Benchmarking is literally “measuring a past state to a past indicator.” Best practices are right now and can be implemented today in every area of a precision manufacturing plant. Tomorrow’s benchmarks are today’s best practices.

The conference’s technical sessions will include “Tooling Management,” “Unique Opportunities With Swiss Machining,” “Feeds & Speeds” and “Thread Master Class & Troubleshooting.” The quality sessions will cover “Best Practice Sessions,” “Mistake Proofing—Preventive Measurement Opportunities,” “We’re Going

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Best Practices are right now and can be implemented in every area.
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Best practices offer something for every shop to aspire to and learn from. They are not limited to a

Paperless, Now What?” and “Global Specification Cross-Referencing.”
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“Best Practices Driving Change” continued.....

The sessions that will appeal to those responsible for making innovative change happen include: “Tips, Tricks, Traps & Advantages Of Cellular Manufacturing,” “Real World Techniques—Effective Teamwork,” “Managing Change” and “Lean—Best Practices.”

The lean session will be presented by Micron Manufacturing Company of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Vanamatic Company of Delphos, Ohio. Both companies have been featured in these pages for their cutting edge innovations. Their talents will be combined for the 2½ hour seminar that is sure to inspire shops to either begin the “lean

journey” or improve what they have already developed.

More than 70 technical members are expected to exhibit on Sunday, April 30, with tools, brochures, catalogs, videos of larger equipment and live software demonstrations. This is a great opportunity to meet with suppliers’ top technical people on a personal basis. There will also be a lunch available and a special door prize raffle.

This year’s Round Table and Discussion sessions will have a few twists. Real-world prints will be available for a range of production equipment so that ideas can be shared as to how best to make the

part. Compare your approach to producing parts by listening to others in the session, reviewing how the shop that contributed the part produced it and observing the creativity of the machine tool builders.

This conference will provide you with today’s best practices—solutions that will enable you to make improvements throughout your operations, giving you an immediate return on your time and investment. For registration information and additional program details, please visit the PMPA Web site at www.pmpa.org/meetings/techconf/. If you have any questions, please contact Monte Guitar at (440) 526-0300 or mguitar@pmpa.org.

What Isn’t Going To Happen In 2006.....

By Miles Free, Director, Technology Services mfree@pmpa.org

The beginning of a new year is typically the time for predicting what is to come in the year ahead, making New Year’s resolutions and renewing commitments to the important things in our lives (such as going to the gym before work each morning). Although it is now March, we are still in the first quarter of a new year. So, here is a variation of the prediction tradition—my short list of what is NOT going to happen in 2006.

Buyers will work on improving supplier relations. Fuggedaboutit. In a crisis, people and organizations don’t worry about etiquette. They focus on results. Also, after a dismal fourth quarter in 2005—gee, nobody rushed out to buy cars from the big automakers since they discontinued their pricing gimmicks—those folks still on the payroll at the OEMs will be singularly focused on results. This means lower prices for what they buy

from us. Making nice will only be a smokescreen to distract you from reading the fine print: multi-year, fixed-price agreements at substantial savings above their current arrangements. Genuine interest in improving relations with suppliers on a win-win basis will not be seen in 2006.

OEMs will try to maintain jobs and content in America. Not a chance. You can bet that the OEMs will continue to wrap themselves in the flag to convince you they are “your American neighbors selling great American products to fellow Americans.” However, the fact is that one OEM’s list of 24 strategic suppliers has only seven U.S. suppliers out of 24 and only one Canadian supplier.

When you see the American flag in a car commercial, you can bet it is there to keep you from seeing all of the foreign content the automakers are “strategically sourcing” to save

money over North American labor rates. Economic patriotism seems to be particularly scarce in Detroit these days, despite all the flag-waving.

Sourcing materials for just-in-time projects will get easier. Well, maybe by the end of the year, but in the first half, already low inventories will continue to drive demand for manufactured goods, thus keeping raw materials in tight supply.

It’s even worse for commodities and other goods. We continue to hear of 1-year-plus lead times for titanium and some exotic super alloy items. Simply getting a quote is difficult, if not impossible, for small-quantity buys. The silver lining in this cloud:

Low inventories mean our shops will be busy at least through the first half of the year.

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