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What types of gears and gear manufacturing processes does Southern Gear excel at? What are you best known for?

Southern Gear excels at making complex, precision gears for the aerospace and defense industry, among others. We like to say, “We make the gears no one else can.” Complex gears with extremely tight tolerances are our specialty. Southern Gear and Machine has been delivering the highest quality precision gears and gearboxes to these most demanding of industries for over 60 years. Manufacturing gears at this level requires experience and capabilities that reach far beyond that of your typical gear manufacturer. That said, we are also experts at making simpler gears, and providing cut-teeth-only services, as well.

What are the core principles/philosophies that influence Southern Gear’s relationships with its customers?

One of our most unique qualities is that we handle all the critical manufacturing processes in-house. From turning to milling, gear cutting to grinding, through inspection, every step of the manufacturing process is done right here at Southern Gear by our skilled machinists and on our modern and very productive equipment. This level of control over the machining process is vitally important to achieving such high quality on such complex parts.

It’s also important to note that at Southern Gear, we partner with our customers, working together to get them the parts they need, when they need them. From engineering through production and delivery, we are in constant contact with our customers to address everything from manufacturability to the customer’s changing quantities and shifting delivery schedules. Our goal is to work with our customers as a team, developing long-term relationships that provide dividends for us all.

What are your most significant capabilities that give you an advantage in meeting customer needs?

Without a doubt, it’s our unique ability to combine an exceptionally experienced and qualified workforce with exactly the right manufacturing resources for the work we do. The average time a machinist has worked here is 14 years, but we have machining supervisors who started at Southern Gear when they were teenagers. Nearly all of our machinists have decades of experience, and it is their skill that allows us to make such challenging parts. The other side of the coin is our equipment. We have spent over \$1 million a year on new equipment, and last year, in spite of COVID, we spent over a million and half. Only by having the latest equipment on our floor, being run and managed by highly skilled machinists, is Southern Gear able to deliver these high precision parts on time and on budget.

What are some of the forces at work in the industry today that pose the most significant challenges and opportunities?

Certainly, our industry is facing a shortage of qualified machinists. It is my hope that with the shifting landscape caused by COVID, and the shifting work of machinists as manufacturing becomes ever more technology-driven, that more young people will pursue this trade. As a company, we work with trade schools and offer internships to train new machinists to enter the industry. This is vitally important. We’re a high-tech company, working with customers in some of the most exciting industries on the planet.



Complex gears with extremely tight tolerances is Southern Gear’s specialty. (Courtesy: Southern Gear)

How has the rise in space flight/space exploration, particularly in the private sector (SpaceX, Blue Origin, Virgin Galactic, etc.) played to Southern Gear’s strengths? In this arena, how is Southern Gear positioned to meet increased demand?

Our people and our resources are strongly positioned to meet the future of the space, aviation, and defense industries. In addition to our investment in new equipment, Southern Gear has installed an advanced manufacturing ERP, sophisticated scheduling software, machine monitoring equipment, auto loaders, and more. We place all of these resources into the hands of our talented employees, who are true artists, creating incredible precision gears that help keep the world moving forward, and the aerospace industry reaching higher. These are exciting times for Southern Gear. We can’t wait to see what’s next. 🚀