Gold Medal Innovation

What makes for a winning product? Tom Suchy speaks on behalf of this year's winning product solution, SKF's DryLube Bearing.

Q: Explain the DryLube bearing technology and its typical applications in an industrial environment.

A: The SKF DryLube bearing technology features a unique dry graphite based lubricant that enables the bearing in some applications to run without relubrication at temperatures up to 660º F (350º C). Typical applications for the SKF DryLube bearings are cooling beds in steel mills, heat treatment furnaces, or ovens in the food & beverage industry; but applications can be found everywhere a bearing is running at elevated temperatures. SKF DryLube bearings were originally designed for high temperature applications but can work well in many other industrial applications.

Q: How does the DryLube bearing help end users address maintenance-related issues?

A: Since the SKF DryLube bearings are virtually maintenance-free, you can eliminate the time and expense related to relubrication. In many applications, the bearing life can be increased, minimizing downtime and releasing time from maintenance to focus on process improvements.

Q: Which elements of the product—it’s maintenance, safety, improved reliability, etc.—do you see as most critical?

A: The main advantage with the SKF DryLube bearings is the improved reliability

due to longer bearing service life. Additional benefits that are equally important are the eliminated need for relubrication, saving on maintenance costs and the improved safety of running a bearing without the use of grease or oil in an elevated temperature application.

Q: How did your customers/market research influence the development of the product?

A: SKF has a long experience in the field of graphite lubricated bearings, but the product range has been limited to deep groove ball bearings of a certain series. We have seen an increased demand for dry lubricated bearings of various bearing types and also the need for such bearings with higher speed ratings.

Q: Bearings have been around for a very long time, yet you've found a way to improve upon them. How might you encourage other manufacturers to take a look at how renewed R&D might affect an old technology?

A: Even though bearings have been around for a long time, advances in new material science are made every day. As technology continues to advance, materials and processes that were thought to not be possible in the past can now be made possible today. R&D plays a significant role in applying these new advances in technology to improve our products. There are endless opportunities to improve our customers' applications through improvements in lubrication, mounting, and monitoring of bearings.

Q: How does SKF see innovation fit into its long term growth and relevance as a company?

A: Innovation is the cornerstone in keeping technical leadership. SKF must not only follow the innovations in the marketplace, but must also lead the development with new materials and processes, and share this knowledge with our customers.

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