

**With expertise in both gear manufacturing and the tools required to make them, this company places a premium on delivering quality to its customers.**

## **BARIT INTERNATIONAL CORP.**

By Russ Willcutt

It's the story of two men who met years ago in their home country of Russia—then the Soviet Union—and eventually joined forces to build a successful company in the United States. The company? Barit International. And the men?

"Alex Polevoy and I worked together for a short time at a gear engineering and manufacturing company in Russia," says Leon Kozlov, vice president and chief engineer at Barit International, of the company's founder. "I had joined the Russian company when I graduated from the Minsk Polytechnic Institute in 1976, which was the same year Alex left it, and two years before he relocated from Russia to the United States. Alex worked for Overton Gear as a chief process engineer until 1989, when he decided to go out on his own to become a distributor of Russian-made gear cutting tools."

Kozlov left Russia in 1991, working for another government gear production company that began purchasing cutting tools from Barit. Once reacquainted, the two men and their families became close, which eventually led to a job offer. "The benefits offered by the government company were excellent, so people rarely left once they'd landed a position," he says. "But I thought that working with Alex was a great opportunity, so when I decided to join him in 1998 I was probably the first person to willingly leave that company."

According to Kozlov, Polevoy was an excellent engineer and a smart and honest businessman, but he needed someone to help him with experience not only in manufacturing gears, but also in making the cutting tools with which they are formed. As it turned out, they only had about four years to work together, since Polevoy succumbed to lung cancer in 2002. This loss resulted in an overhaul of the company's leadership team and sales force. While the Polevoy family retains ownership of Barit International—with his widow, Rita, as president—Kozlov was named vice president in addition to his original title of chief engineer, and the company has continued to grow and evolve.

Part of that evolution involved moving away from supplying Russian-made products alone—although the company still has an inventory of stock tooling from those suppliers—and finding manufacturers for its wide variety of cutting tools from all across Europe. The reason for this decision had to do with the fact that they'd begun supplying larger companies such as Kawasaki Motors, Process Gear, Letourneau Technologies, Ontario Drive & Gear, Morgan Construction and, yes, Overton Gear, that required premium materials the


Russian manufacturers simply didn't have access to. "We still work with companies of all sizes," Kozlov is quick to add, "but it was necessary to raise the quality of our product line in order to meet the needs of these very discerning and well-known customers."

With 30 years of experience in the gear-manufacturing industry, Kozlov says that he utilizes that acquired knowledge in helping lead customers in the right direction during the quoting process. "If I think something will work better for them than what they've asked for, I'll make that clear, even if it means we don't get that particular sale," he says, "because I know they will remember that and give me the chance to quote them again on another order down the road. We're not just interested in making the sale, we want to build a relationship, and the best way to do that is to be straightforward and honest from the very beginning."

This approach has paid off, with a growing customer base of companies found around the world. While the majority of them are found in the United States, Barit International ships to some 20 countries, including South America, Australia, South Africa, Asia, Western and Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. In an interesting twist, it also sells into Russia, the Ukraine, and Belarus. This wide acceptance is due, in part, to competitive pricing and the excellent quality of the tools, but also to the engineering design and personalized customer services the company provides.

"These days, the vast majority of the cutting tools we ship are custom-made per the customer's specifications," Kozlov explains. "Our engineers work with the customers to make sure the tools are exactly what they need, and made of the optimal high-speed steel grades required for their particular applications."

Whether those requirements involve hobs, broaches, shapers, shavers, or milling cutters, Barit International is prepared to meet their demands. And it has recently begun supplying cutting tools for spiral bevel gears, which Kozlov says are his particular area of expertise.

Barit has decided to handle the majority of its sales efforts internally, believing that customers deserve direct communication with their supplier. "That's also why we choose to attend GEAR EXPO every year it's held," Kozlov says, "because we want our current and potential customers to know who they're buying from, and that their business is very important to us. We want them to know that, when they call Barit International, they'll get the personalized service they deserve, and that we're here to help them in any way that we can." 

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