How to Optimize the Value of the ET ’22 Seminar

By Craig Werner, ET’22 Chairman

The Aluminum Extruders Council (AEC) and ET Foundation are proud to be offering ET ’22, their 12th International Aluminum Extrusion Technology seminar and exhibition. This truly unique industry event will be held May 3-5, 2022 in Orlando, FL, providing an outstanding experience, rich with critical extrusion knowledge and valuable networking opportunities.

Part I of this article series (LMA, December 2021) highlighted key changes to the event and provided an overview of the ET offerings, including the seminar proceedings, exhibition, extrusion showcase, trainings and workshops, and special networking events. In addition, it noted some ways to begin preparing for the event, particularly how to budget time and money for the show, as well as booking hotel rooms early. Part II will now expand on this information, covering more specifics regarding how best to utilize current and past information in order to best benefit and wring every drop of value out of this year’s ET.

Event Overview

The ET ’22 seminar will feature both general and technical sessions with over 110 technical papers organized into six tracks. The two general sessions will include important information, industry insights, and motivational speakers, as well as the Best of ET and Best of Track papers. In this way, every attendee will be able to attend the “Best of” papers, as they will not conflict with other track presentations. Since the general sessions will occur on the morning of Tuesday, May 3, and the afternoon of Thursday, May 5, it is recommended that attendees schedule travel so that they will be able to attend all seven of these outstanding paper author presentations.

The technical sessions are a treasure trove of key content for the aluminum extrusion industry. These highly relevant papers are authored by industry experts and vetted and curated by dedicated volunteers. The technical tracks, along with some of the expected papers, are as follows:

- **Billet Process (BP)** – the use of 5xxx alloys for automotive applications, how to choose the optimal 6063 billets, how to improve 6082 microstructure by adjusting the size and distribution of dispersoids, how to understand the precipitation of dispersoids during homogenization of 3xxx and 6xxx alloys, etc.
- **Extrusion Equipment (EE)** – automatic surface inspection during extrusion, how to minimize distortion during extrusion quenching, innovative means of loading billets, how to functionally guard equipment, how to modernize extrusion press and handling systems, how to ensure that a plant is ready for the connected future, etc.
- **Extrusion Die/Practical (EP)** – extrusion productivity available through understanding billet geometry, understanding the container and dummy block, quality requirements for aerospace application, high performance multi-port tubes, how press quench rate affects automotive extrusion performance, inline continuous surface inspections, using multi-step aging for 6xxx alloys, the effect of water temperature on quench rates, comparisons of hot work tool steels for dies, etc.
- **Extrusion Die/Theoretical (TH)** – modeling 6xxx recrystallization, quench sensitivity and surface tearing, comprehensive extrusion technology development, process simulation integrated with die design and quality control, numerical simulation of 6060 thermomechanical streaking, the effect of press quench rate on grain boundary precipitation and fracture performance of 6xxx, modeling of nitrogen cooling, modeling of extrusion welding conditions, etc.
- **Management Issues (MI)** – safety and quality focuses, manufacturing efficiency, automation, manufacturing data systems and traceability, attracting and developing talent, updates on billet supply, etc.
- **Value Added (VA)** – critical finishing (anodizing and wet and powder painting topics), packaging advancements, innovative forming processes, using technologies such as artificial intelligence techniques to improve the structural properties of welded aluminum, an aluminum intensive micro car, an extrusion based additive manufacturing process, friction stir welding, etc.

In addition to the many valuable presentations, the event will include concurrent training and workshop opportunities before and after the formal seminar program. These courses include the Process Analysis and Optimization Workshop, the AEC Paint & Powder Coating Workshop, the Anodizing Essentials course, the AEC Die Clinic, and the Extrusion Excellence: Applied Fundamentals for Aluminum Extruders course.

The event will also include a 100,000 sq ft exhibition hall with over 100 exhibitors and a large Extrusion Showcase, where the user of extrusions in various applications will be highlighted. Countless networking activities—including special 50th Anniversary events—will be available, providing ample opportunities to connect with colleagues, customers, suppliers, peers, and friends.

Preparing for ET

As the old saying goes, “Luck favors the prepared mind.” The same could be said for ET ’22. With the amount of papers and events available, one of the main challenges is determining how to prepare team members ahead of time. However, doing so is vital, because it can be easy to get lost in the shuffle of the event without that preparation. As a long-time attendee and volunteer for many ETs over the years, I’d like to share some insights on how to approach the planning process to make the most out of the event.

Pre-Seminar Planning: The first step is to determine a budget and the number of employees who will be attending the event—if you have not done so already. Then, choose the team members who will visit the seminar, ensuring that the team is able to represent varying aspects of the company’s operations (die experts, metallurgists, process engineers, operations, maintenance and plant engineering, management, etc.). When I attended ETs as part of Werner Co., the company would often send 15-20 or more people to the event. It is recommended to register soon in order to take advantage of early and team discounts. Hotel rooms should also be booked as soon as possible to ensure event housing to save valuable time.

Once the team has been decided, have them do a thorough review of all of the paper abstracts, classes and workshops, and exhibitors. While planning, it’s important to keep in mind that classes and workshops (along with the special anniversary events) are available on a limited-space basis at an additional cost, so it is best to register for these early.

The best way to understand the seminar and technical presentation offerings is to carefully and fully read the ab-
tracts available online. In order to create an executable plan of attack, have the team create a list of papers and exhibitors that will be of the most interest and/or value to them and use a common weighted ranking system to identify individual and company “must sees.” Assign a team member to create spreadsheets to lay out the weighted ranking of papers, exhibitors, and other attendee contacts (customers, suppliers, etc.), which can be linked to various team members’ interests. Draft a simple schedule and make as a team to negotiate who will attend what events in order to ensure adequate coverage of necessary papers, exhibitors, and workshops, as well as meeting with other attendees. After discussions, modify and lock this plan in place with specific team members given their assignments.

With the team assignments agreed upon, each team member should be given further preparation duties. They should note their subjects of interest and research and read past ET papers in order to gain background on their topics of interest. If the company has attended previous events, they could already have access to the records (in the form of books, CDs, memory sticks, or online access). If not, past presentations are available for purchase on the AEC website (www.aec.org/store), which also has a searchable database of ET’04 through ET’16 papers. In addition, AEC members have access to an expansive database of webinars, many of which cover aspects of past ET papers, which could provide additional background.

Make certain that the review of necessary past ET papers are assigned to specific team members and be sure to set up a simple means to capture key takeaways from these papers in a document, spreadsheet, or database. This way, the information can then be provided to all attendees for quick review in order to help them prepare.

What to Do During and After ET: If possible during the event, hold daily planned review meetings before or after dinner and assign a “scribe” to track key items from the papers, exhibitors, or workshops that should be followed up on. The scribe should create a simple outlined matrix on a spreadsheet, database, or other system, and the team leader should ask the team questions to fully understand and document the key follow-ups. Often one person’s comments will trigger additional thoughts from others in the team, which will help to more fully develop the proper follow-up list. Try not to wait until after ET, when everyone is back at the office, to do this—as they will likely lose the “heat of the moment” enthusiasm and because memories fade all too quickly.

Once everyone is back at the company office, use the follow-up spreadsheet or database to drive future company discussions, project plans, experiments, training, and so forth on an ongoing basis. This will help everyone garner the greatest advantage out of the knowledge, resources, and connections gained at ET ’22.

Updates Regarding COVID-19

The situation surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be uncertain, especially considering the recent Omicron variant’s high transmissibility rate. The AEC and ET Foundation are both committed to ensuring the health and safety of all speakers, volunteers, and attendees and, therefore, will set protocols for ET ’22 based on the most current international regulations. At this time, based on the current COVID-19 situation, and the possibility of more variants occurring, it seems prudent to require all ET ’22 attendees to either show proof of up-to-date fully vaccinated status or require negative PCR tests within a to-be-determined time period prior to attending ET. AEC staff will also be evaluating how best to provide testing and other assistance to attendees visiting from outside the U.S., and we will communicate these plans in advance of the event.

Considering the fluidity of the situation, the AEC and ET Foundation will continue to review and study the best criteria and methods to assure the safety of all participants, with the most up-to-date information and policies, which will be available on the ET website. We are all hoping and planning for the likely relief from COVID-19 and related travel issues in the coming months, and we anticipate that the worldwide extrusion community will gather in strong numbers in Florida in early May to celebrate and to take full advantage of all that ET ’22 has to offer.

Conclusion

ET ’22 will be an exceptional opportunity to learn and network. With it having been six years since the prior ET, the worldwide extrusion community eagerly awaits the chance to come together to advance themselves, their companies, and the industry as a whole. Major world events have impacted the industry in the time since the last event. COVID-19 and other economic issues have had a significant effect on the global supply chain, which has led to an industry focus on reshoring. Coupled with the extremely attractive U.S. interest rates that will likely continue, this makes the U.S. a strong trading partner. These factors further increase the importance of the industry knowledge and excellent international networking opportunities offered at all ETs. I am personally looking forward to reconnecting with so many friends and colleagues at this much heralded and long-awaited industry event.

Editor’s Note: Learn more about the ET’22 seminar, exhibition, and workshops, along with how the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic will affect activities, at: www.et22.org.

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