Kurt's clinic

Kurt Hertzog gives some answers to readers' questions

Bandsaw speed

Question: I use my bandsaw lot. The original motor on my 1965 Rockwell/Delta runs at 1800rpm and is about worn out. I have a much more powerful used motor available but it's 2500 or 2800rpm. Will the extra rpm mess stuff up?

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With a sfpm increase, you may need to make blade selection changes for thicker stock and resawing

Answer More important than the rpm of the motor is the final blade speed. Blade speed, in surface feet per minute, is how fast the blade moves as it cuts through the stock. If you cut metal, this is very important and is usually pretty slow. If you cut wood, it is faster but not especially critical. During the design, manufacturers are balancing their planned motor rpm and torque with their pulley ratios and saw blade wheel sizes to obtain a reasonable blade speed for the materials to be cut. Without changing any of the pulley ratios in the bandsaw, your proposed motor change will dramatically increase the blade speed. You'll almost be doubling the blade speed. This isn't a show stopper but certainly should be considered. In thin stock, you probably won't notice much difference. In thicker stock and re-sawing, you may run into problems based on the blade choices. Providing your replacement motor has the torque to drive the existing saw mechanics to your satisfaction, you'll potentially need to use blades with fewer teeth per inch in thicker stock. The higher blade speed with your existing blades might result in more aggressive cuts with higher heat and the coarse surface finish results. If needed, try reducing the tpi of your blades by about 80% to compensate for the motor rpm increase. Personally, I'd make the motor change and adjust my 'speeds and feeds' of use to slow my cuts in thicker stocks and see how things work out.

Lidded bowls

Question: I am making small bowls, lidded boxes and pens to sell at my local craft fairs. Most people look a lot but don't buy. I don't think my prices are out of line but there are others in the fairs at lower prices. Any suggestions for how to combat this and get a reasonable price for my work?

Answer You've run into the biggest complaint there is among turners selling their work. Regardless of their marketplace, whether the craft fair, gallery, online, or consignment, we all face competition from the work of others. Often this lower-priced work is of lesser quality in your eyes but not in the customer's eyes. We often write this off as their lack of understanding or appreciation for the results. As you've noted, the local craft fairs are particularly brutal. You are often competing with people who have no intention of making a profit. These folks are interested in recovering some or all of their out-of-pocket materials cost to subsidise their hobby. With no valid assessment or intention to cover their real costs, they price at levels that can't be competed against effectively. You have a few options to help address your situation. You can change your venues to a more upscale clientele. These can be shows that are juried or the higher-priced booth events. Usually the low-ball pricing makers are unable to be juried in or unwilling to pay the higher costs. Another option is to offer unique items that aren't the commodity turnings many vendors in the show will offer. Your pens, bottle stoppers, small bowls, lidded boxes, etc. have multiple sources. With unique items, i.e. painted, pierced, pyrographed, or other altered results, you may be able to be the only one in the show with these items. As such, their plain Jane items are obviously lesser than your offerings. This certainly adds to your product cost and without low-ball competitors you can price as necessary. It is a way to separate you from the low-end producers. If you solve the problem, please let me know. It is an ongoing issue for us all.

Simple modifications and/or enhancements can make your work exhibit the reason for higher pricing

Up the quality of products

Sharpening tools

Question: As a beginner, I struggle with sharpening tools. The carbide cutter tools seem to solve sharpening problems. Am I missing something by only buying carbide tools?

Answer One of the often touted 'advantages' of carbide tools is that you don't need to master the skills of tool sharpening or even have a sharpening system available. If you use exclusively carbide cutter tools, that might be true. That said, you have a couple of ongoing disadvantages. First, the cost of replacing the cutters as needed is higher than touching up your tools at the grinder once you have one. Over the long haul, it will be a more expensive method of having sharp tools. Most carbide cutters, depending on their design, can be refreshed with a diamond hone helping reduce the ongoing costs, but there still is a needed cutter replacement threshold. Another disadvantage is the limit of the designs available to the end user. While the carbide tool manufacturers may suggest that there isn't any need for tools other than what they offer, I find having an Irish grind bowl gouge, various-sized skew chisels, and a good detail gouge as very valuable tools in my kit. In my opinion, there are many uses for carbide cutter tools but I include them in my kit along with my traditional tools, using each where they excel. Because sharpening is a skill that is easily learned with some instruction and practice, I recommend that you learn it and include both carbide and traditional turning tools in your arsenal. Each will provide use and you can use each where they are suited best. ●

For the newcomer or non-sharpener, carbide cutter tools can make woodturning an easy craft to take part in

Send in your questions to Kurt's email: kurt@kurthertzog.com