

Last week I told you about a trip I took to visit The Genie Company, makers of the Genie Garage Door Opener in Mt. Hope, Ohio. In talking about this and giving my trip report, I received an unusual amount of emails about the subject of garage door openers as well as manufacturing product in the USA and in particular in Ohio. Genie is the only garage door opener manufacturer in the US, everybody else is across the border or overseas. I guess I hit on a subject that we haven't talked much about here on the show so maybe there was a bit of pent up demand.

One of the purposes of why I was invited on the trip was for education, mine as much as theirs. I was there to learn about the products and the people, and they wanted to learn more from us as consumers and me as a talk show host on what was important to my listeners. It is interesting on how when a company surveys, polls, consumer tests, or asks for input, what you get is always somewhat skewed because people know that you are trying to get information out of them and they feel they have to deliver. They will tell you things you want to hear even if it is not their story because they want to tell you a story! So in all the discussions we were having on tours, in conference rooms, in the cars going from place to place, I was trying to figure out what is important to people about their garage door openers from the manufacturers point of view, and from what I hear in your homes, on the phone, and on the air, what is important to you.

Here is what I have come up with. #1 you want reliability that when you push the button the door goes up or down. Now this seems obvious right. You want the thing to do what it is supposed to do. But beyond that, people want it to go up and down quietly and smoothly. No squeels, grinds, rattles that make you think the opener is about to fall off the ceiling. Also, it should lift the door under control and not all jerky that tries to tear apart the door. Now this is in a technical way, a lot to ask for. All doors are different, they are adjusted different, the openers are installed different, homeowners maintain things different, yet the opener has to perform. A tough task.

#2 Security is a big deal. People want to know that nobody else can open their door. And, when the door is closed, it is shut tight.

#3 Safety. People don't want to squish the cat, the dog, the kids, or close the door on the trunk of the car. In 1993 safety beams were mandated but a lot of doors still do not have them. Or they are bypassed or do not work. This is the most common help line problem Genie gets calls about.

There are other things on the list of what people want. Lights that stay on while you are in the garage not just for three minutes. How far the transmitter works from, Lights on the back of the opener, not the front! The speed of the open and close. Battery back ups if the power goes out. And now the Closed Confirm remote that tells you if you closed the door as you drove away. Yes, really.

Genie has got their arms wrapped around all of this and more. But the one thing that I think was the most interesting from a product standpoint is the motors of these operators. Genie has an opener line that uses a 140 volt DC motor. Not 110 v AC, but 140 v DC. These are the units I saw them making in the factory the day I was there. Now think of your cordless drills, 18 volts DC. It gives you a

lot of torque, and you can control the speed. Put a super size version of this in your garage door opener and you have strong, quiet, and smooth. They put this in their own "C" channel track design that is very strong and keeps dirt and debris off the moving parts. The opener is lighter than others without the big AC motor, which makes installing it even easier. But, here is the cool part. Intelligence. Yup, it is even in your garage door opener. GenieSense delivers the power needed, when it is needed. As each segment of your door goes through the curve at the top of the track, the power to lift it changes. Some geometry thing. The AC motor adjusts itself for this and minimizes wear and tear of your door and improves safety.

There are three basic opener mechanisms in the Genie product line.

The start of the line up is the Chain Drive models. These are the ones you will see on sale and featured as a price point. These openers are good, been around a long time, even though they are low cost, the new safety features make them worthwhile if you are on a budget but a slight move up the features and benefits list is really worth it if you can save up just a few more dollars.

Belt drive models have a flexible smooth drive belt instead of a chain. What this does is take out a bunch of noise in the operation of the opener. Very quiet and extremely reliable. A bit more expensive, but if quiet as well as some other features are important to you, this is your next opener.

The other way to make the door go up and down is with a screw drive mechanism. This has been around a while and is very strong, still quiet due to some new engineering, and is the ultimate in durability for big heavy doors.

ALL of these openers have the DC motor technology. The top models have a Limited Lifetime warranty on the motor, the drive screw and 5 years on the other parts.

Genie is sending me an opener to install in my garage. And Boy, can I use it. I am surprised every morning when what I have still opens the door, it doesn't sound good at all. And no safety beams. That is an accident waiting to happen. BUT, you too will have a chance to get a new opener for your house. And right before Christmas! We will be giving away a top of the line Genie Garage Door opener to one of you who listen to this show. Stay tuned in the coming weeks to find out how you can win it. Not that we are holding anything back, I just haven't figured out how to do this and have some fun. .

In the mean time, check out www.geniecompany.com to learn more.