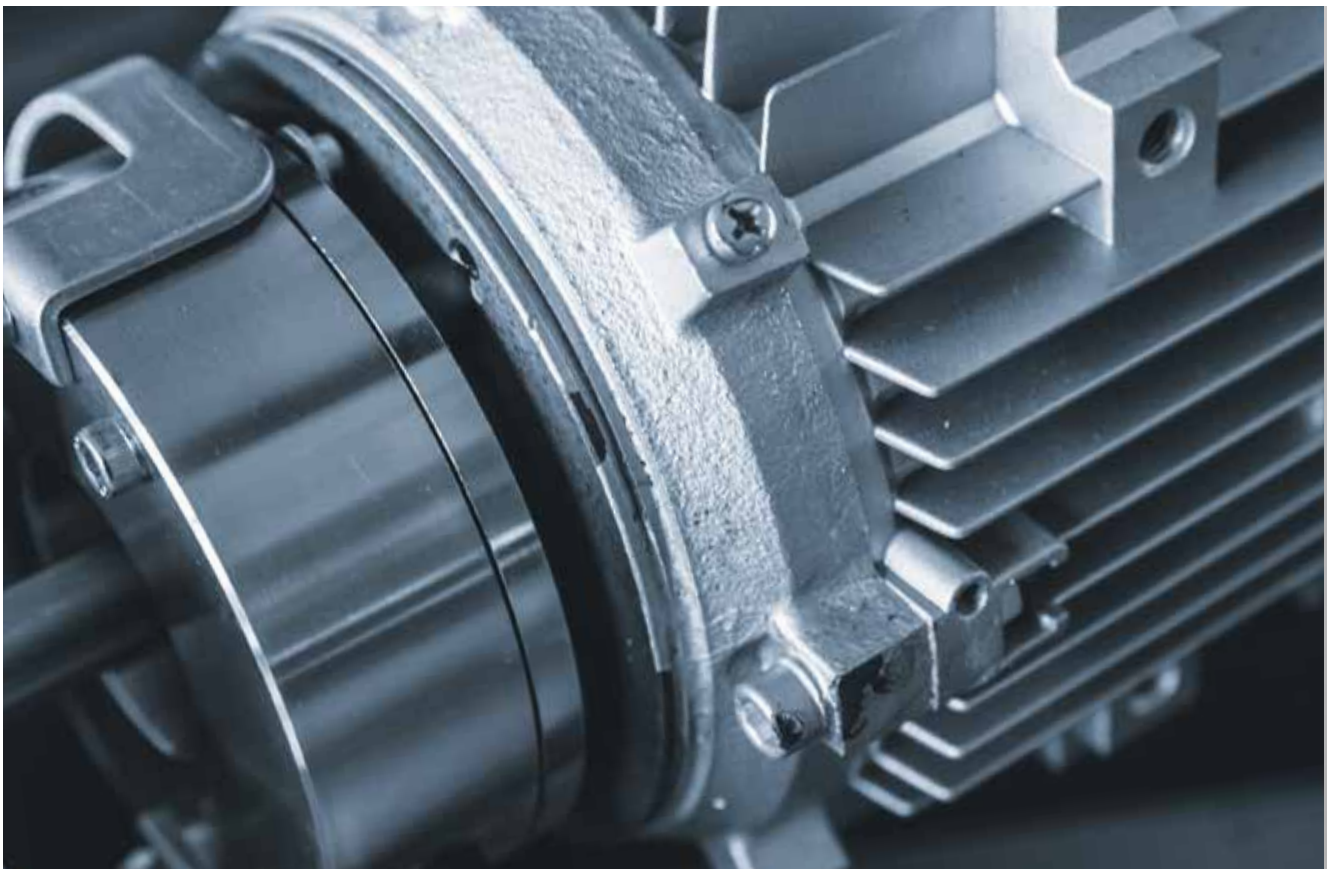




**BENSHAW**  
*Applied Motor Controls*

WHITE PAPER



# Get Your Motor Running: Understanding Starting Torque

*Rapid | Rugged | Global*

# Get your motor running

***The starting function of motors is often misunderstood, impacting motor performance and compromising energy efficiency.***

Machines and motor loads have widely differing starting torque requirements. Some motor applications need only 10% rated torque to accelerate to full speed while other applications may require over 200% torque. The starting torque requirement is usually not constant over the speed range from zero to full speed. In this paper we explore the basics of starting torque and offer an introduction to determining the starting torque requirements of your application.

# Starting torque requirements of machines and motor loads

The starting torque necessary to start a machine has two major components:

- Work or load torque
- Acceleration torque

The initial starting torque requirement is the breakaway torque - the torque required to start the machine from a standstill.

Once the motor has begun to rotate the torque becomes the sum of the work torque and the acceleration torque.

The work torque is the torque required to overcome the mechanical work being done by the machine and includes friction losses and windage losses. The work torque is speed dependent and in applications such as fans and pumps, the work torque has a speed squared relationship.

The acceleration torque is the torque which accelerates the load or machine to full speed. It is the torque developed by the motor minus the work requirement of the motor load. To accelerate a high inertia load, a high acceleration torque is required.

Increased acceleration torque reduces the starting time. During start, the motor is under stress and is effectively overloaded. High inertia applications may need a long start time and/or high start current. For these applications the entire electrical system from mains supply to load must be considered. For example, fuses and other equipment, as well as the soft starter, should be selected for the long start time.

# Typical application examples

## PUNCH PRESS

A punch press application (where the motor is accelerating only a large flywheel) is an example of a machine requiring high acceleration torque and low work torque. The machine exhibits low friction and windage losses but has a high inertia. The torque requirements are initially the breakaway torque and then predominantly acceleration torque until full speed is reached.

## FAN

In contrast a fan has a work torque which increases with the fan speed so sufficient torque must be available to accelerate the fan and also shift a volume of air dependent on the fan speed. Many applications such as fans and pumps exhibit a speed squared work characteristic.

## COMPRESSOR

Refrigeration compressors generally start unloaded and work against a low pressure, but can reach full pressure within a limited number of revolutions unless a bypass valve is used during start. Sufficient torque must be available to either accelerate the compressor to full speed before a high pressure is reached, or accelerate the compressor against the maximum pressure achieved during start.

## FLYWHEEL

A flywheel is used as a mechanical energy reservoir in many machines, allowing a high intermittent or transient torque loading with a smaller motor operating with reduced maximum torque demand.

To start the motor and flywheel, the energy must be converted from the electrical energy by the motor, and be transferred to the flywheel by the coupling and drive system. The starting time is dependent on the amount of stored energy in the flywheel at full speed, and the rate of energy transfer from the electrical supply to the flywheel.

The potential energy of the flywheel at speed depends on the inertia and the speed of the flywheel. The rate of energy transfer from the motor depends on the torque developed by the motor.

***The specification of the starting torque requirements of a machine is an engineering problem and in some cases can become complex. In many cases motor selection and starting requirements are traditionally based on experience.***

## Starting torque equations

There are some equations that are useful in determining starting torque requirements.

### TORQUE OUTPUT OF THE MOTOR, $T_m$

$$T_m = 9600 \times \frac{\text{kW}}{N}$$

$T_m$  = full load torque in Nm

kW = rated power in kW

N = rated full load speed of the motor in RPM

$$T_m = 5250 \times \frac{\text{hp}}{N}$$

$T_m$  = full load torque in lb-ft

hp = rated power in horsepower

N = rated full load speed of the motor in RPM

$$T_m = 7040 \times \frac{\text{kW}}{N}$$

$T_m$  = full load torque in lb-ft

kW = rated power in kW

N = rated full load speed of the motor in RPM

$$T_m = 63030 \times \frac{\text{hp}}{N}$$

$T_m$  = full load torque in lb-in

hp = rated power in horsepower

N = rated full load speed of the motor in RPM

## ACCELERATION TORQUE, $T_A$

$$T_a = \frac{M \times N}{9.5t}$$

M = moment of inertia seen by the motor including inertia of the motor in  $\text{kgm}^2$

N = rated full load speed of the motor in RPM

t = time for acceleration from zero speed to rated full load speed

$$T_a = \frac{M \times N}{308t}$$

M = moment of inertia seen by the motor including inertia of the motor in  $1\text{b-ft}^2$

N = rated full load speed of the motor in RPM

t = time for acceleration from zero speed to rated full load speed

If the load is operated at a different speed from the motor, a correction is applied to the load inertia.

$$M = M_{\text{motor}} + M_{\text{load}} \left( \frac{N_{\text{load}}}{N_{\text{motor}}} \right)^2$$

i.e. the effective moment of inertia seen by the motor is the actual load inertia multiplied by the speed ratio squared, in such a manner that if the load speed is higher than the motor, the effective inertia is increased.

The starting torque of the motor must initially exceed the breakaway torque and must also exceed the work and minimum acceleration torque during starting.

## REQUIRED START CURRENT

Once the starting torque is known, the required start current can be calculated.

The LRT of the motor depends on the motor design - see the motor manufacturer's data.  
The LRC is also a function of motor design, and typically ranges from 500% FLA to 800% FLA.

The ratio of LRT to required starting torque is equal to the square of the ratio of LRC to the required start current.

$T_{LR}$  = locked rotor torque

$$\frac{T_{LR}}{T_{ST}} = \frac{(I_{LR})^2}{(I_{ST})^2}$$

$T_{ST}$  = starting torque

$I_{LR}$  = locked rotor current

$I_{ST}$  = start current

Therefore required start current: 
$$I_{ST} = I_{LR} \times \sqrt{\left(\frac{T_{ST}}{T_{LR}}\right)}$$

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