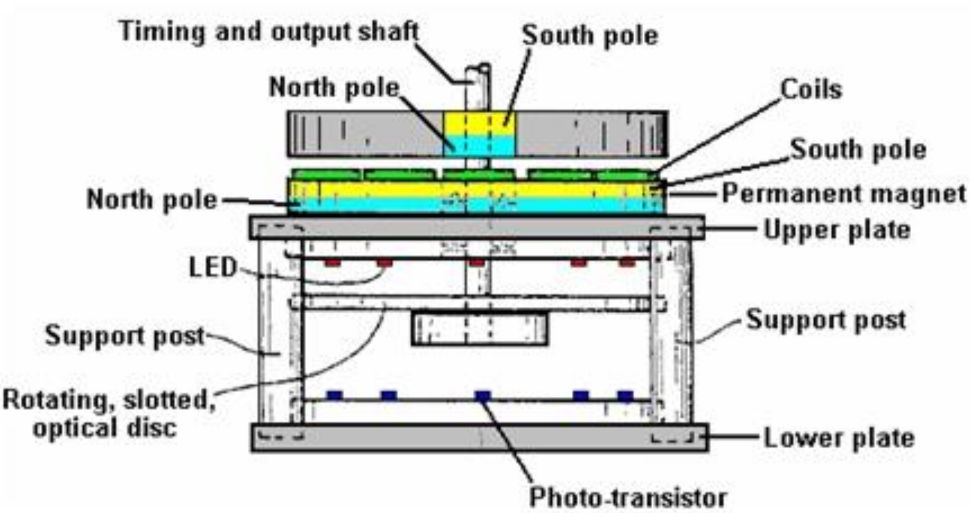
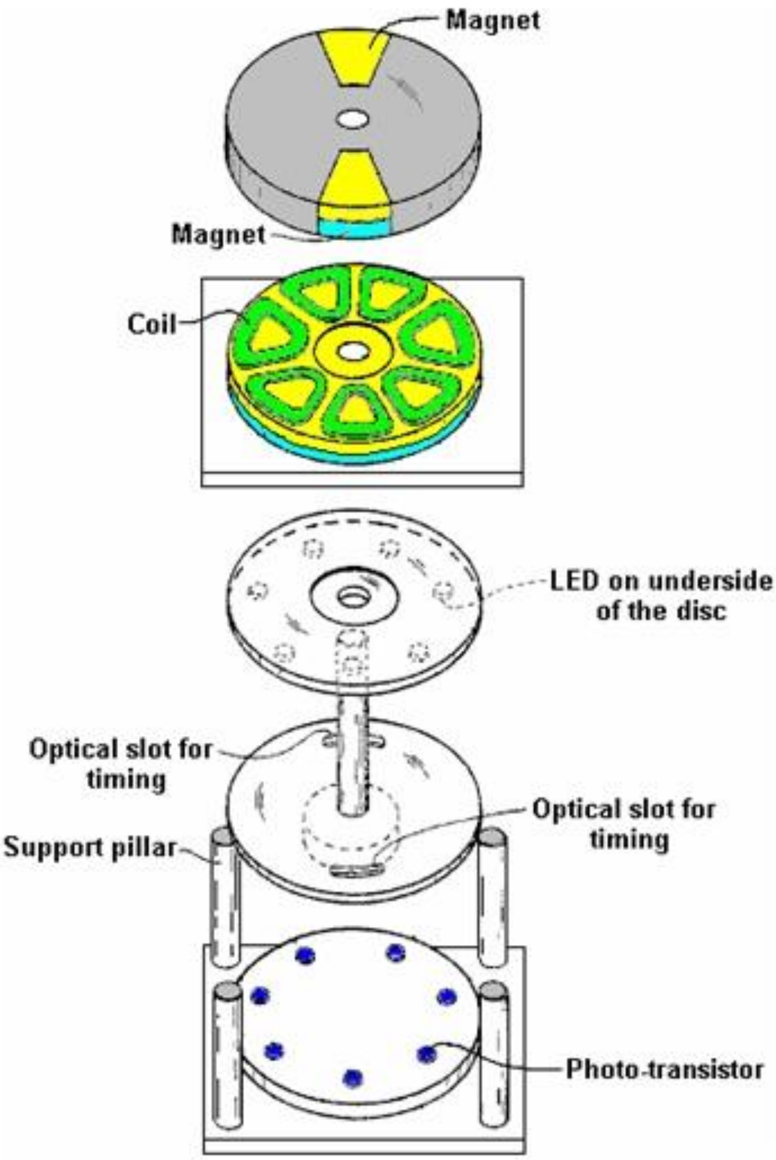
Charles Flynn's Permanent Magnet Motor.

Patent US 5,455,474 dated 3rd October 1995 and shown in full in the Appendix, gives details of this interesting design. It says: "This invention relates to a method of producing useful energy with magnets as the driving force and represents an important improvement over known constructions and it is one which is simpler to construct, can be made to be self-starting, is easier to adjust, and is less likely to get out of adjustment. The present construction is also relatively easy to control, is relatively stable and produces an amazing amount of output energy considering the source of driving energy that is used. The present construction makes use of permanent magnets as the source of driving energy but shows a novel means of controlling the magnetic interaction or coupling between the magnet members and in a manner which is relatively rugged, produces a substantial amount of output energy and torque, and in a device capable of being used to generate substantial amounts of energy."

The patent describes more than one motor. The first one is like this when seen from the side:

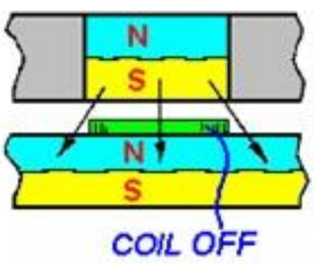


An exploded view, shows the different parts clearly:

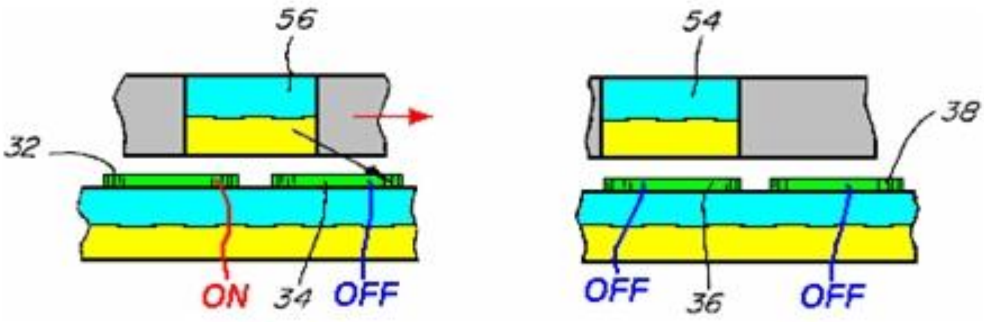


This construction is relatively simple and yet the operation is powerful. The power is provided by three magnets, shown shaded in blue and yellow. The lower magnet is in the form of a disc with the poles arranged on the large, circular, flat faces. This is the stator magnet which does not move. Positioned above it is a disc made of nonmagnetic material (shaded in grey) and which has two magnets embedded in it. This disc is the rotor and is attached to the central vertical shaft.

Normally, the rotor would not rotate, but between the two discs there is a ring of seven coils which are used to modify the magnetic fields and produce powerful rotation. The powering up of these coils is very simple and it is arranged by shining a beam of Ultra Violet light from one of the Light-Emitting Diodes through a slot in an opticaltiming disc attached to the rotating shaft. The LEDs and the photo-transistors are aligned with the centres of the seven coils. The position and width of the slot controls which photo-transistor gets switched on and for how long it remains powered up. This is a very neat and compact arrangement. The really interesting part of the design is how the coils modify the magnetic fields to produce the output power of the device. The orientation of the magnet poles can be swapped over, provided that this is done for all three magnets.



Shown here is the situation when one of the rotor magnets has rotated to where it is above one of the coils which is not yet powered up. The South pole of the rotor magnet is attracted to the North pole which is the entire upper face of the stator magnet as shown by the three arrows. If a voltage is applied to the coil, then this magnetic coupling is disrupted and altered. If any torque is developed as a result of the coil being powered up, then it will be developed to either side of the energised coil. If the coil is not powered up, then there will be full attraction between the magnets and no rotational force will be produced. You will notice that there are two rotating magnets (an even number) and seven coils (an odd number) so when one of the rotor magnets is above a coil, then the other isn't. This staggering of the two positions is essential for generating smooth, continuous rotational torque and self-starting without any need to rotate the shaft manually.

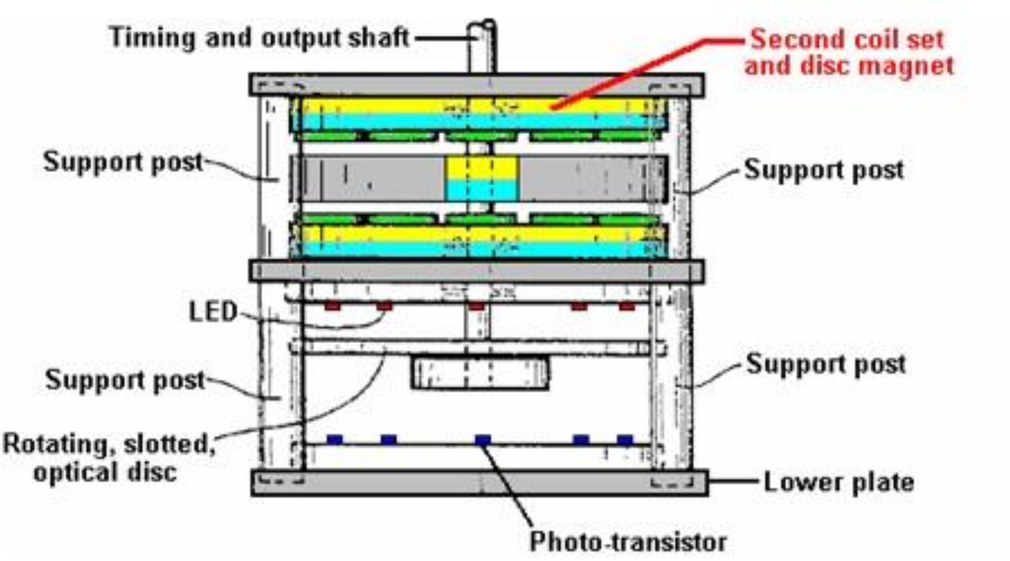


The diagram above shows a piece from both sides of the rotor disc, to explain the operation of the coils. On the left, magnet **56** overlaps coil **32** and coil **34**. Coil **32** is powered up and this breaks the magnetic link on the left hand side of magnet **56**. But, coil **34** is not powered up, so the attraction between magnet **56** and the disc magnet under the coils remains. Even though this attraction is at a downward angle, it creates a push on the rotor, driving it towards the right as shown by the red arrow.

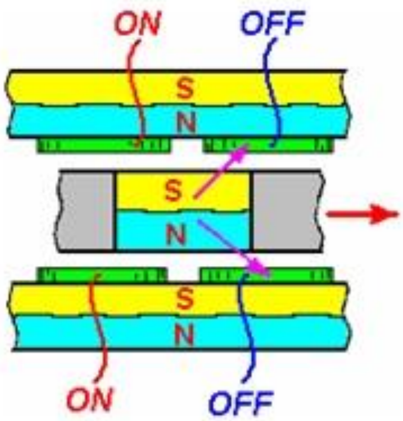
While this is happening, the situation around the other side of the rotor disc, is shown on the right. Here, magnet **54** is above coil **36** and that coil is not powered up, so there is no resulting drive in either direction - just a downward pull on the rotor magnet, towards the stator magnet below it. The adjacent coil **38** is also not powered up and so has no effect on the rotation. This method of operation is **very** close to that of the motor design of Robert Adams described in the next chapter. It is important to understand that this method of operation is nothing like that of the John Bedini pulsers where the rotation of a disc is caused by the electrical pulse applied to a coil creating a repulsion thrust to a rotor magnet. Instead, here, the coil acts as a magnetic shield, being provided with the minimum possible power to do its job. The coil is, in effect, a shield which has no moving parts, and so is a very clever mechanism for overcoming the tendency for the rotor magnets to lock on to the stator magnets and preventing rotation.

At any moment, six of the seven coils in this design are inactive, so in effect, just one coil is powered. This is not a major current drain. It is important to understand that the power of this motor is provided by the permanent magnets pulling towards each other. Each of the two magnets applies a horizontal pull on the rotor every seventh of a turn, that is, every 51.1 degrees in the rotation. As the coils are an uneven number, the rotor gets a magnetic pull every 25.5 degrees in the rotation, first from one rotor magnet and then from the other rotor magnet.

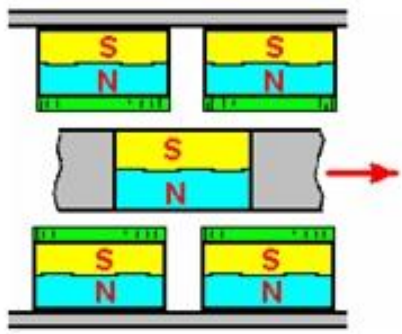
It follows then, that the power of the motor can be increased by adding more magnets. The first step in this search for additional power is to add a second disc magnet and coils on the other side of the rotor, so that there is a second pull on the magnet. This has the added advantage that it balances the downwards pull of the first disc magnet with an upward pull, giving an enhanced and balanced horizontal thrust as shown here:



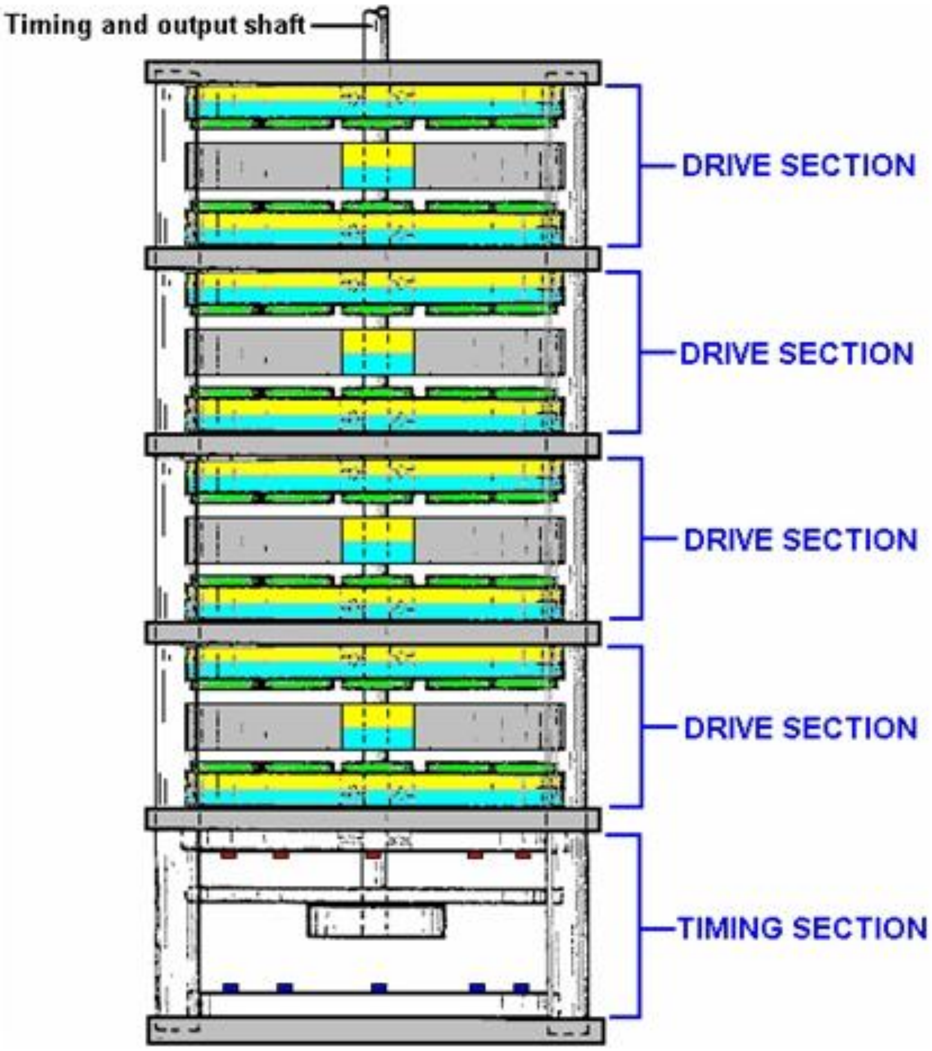
The coil switching with the additional layer of coils is shown here:



This produces a larger horizontal thrust. While this design goes for optimum performance, I suggest that a much more simple form of construction with a ring of standard circular neodymium magnets could be used instead of one large disc magnet, and ordinary circular coils placed on top of the circular magnets, and this allows large diameter rotors to be constructed, the larger diameter giving greater output shaft power:

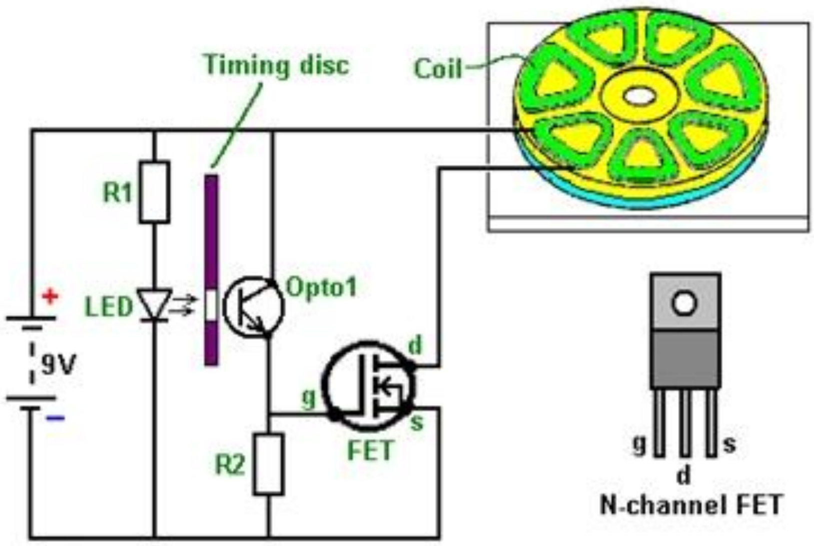


To increase the power of the output shaft further again, additional sets of magnets and coils can be added as shown here:



It should be remembered that the timing section shown above could be replaced by a NE555 timer circuit which generates a steady stream of On / Off pulses. When those pulses are fed to the coils, the motor rotates, slaving itself to the pulse rate. This gives an immediate speed control for the motor as well as avoiding the need for the precise positioning of the slotted disc which allows the LEDs to shine directly on to the phototransistors at the appropriate instant. If that approach is taken, then the timing section shown above would be omitted.

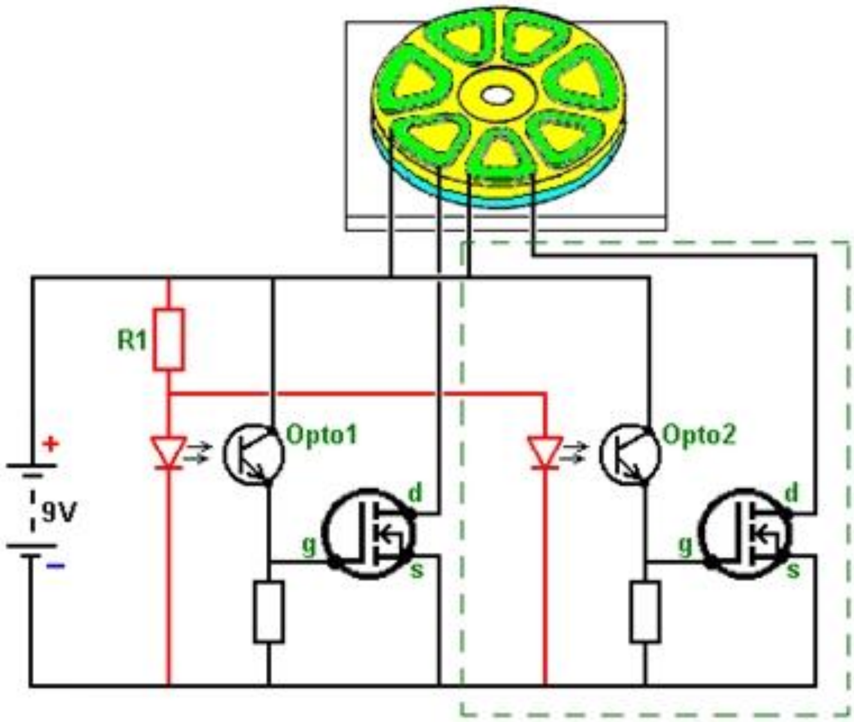
The circuitry that Charles specifies for powering the coils to block the magnetic fields of the permanent magnets uses N-channel MOSFETs and is very simple. Here is his circuit for driving one of the coils:



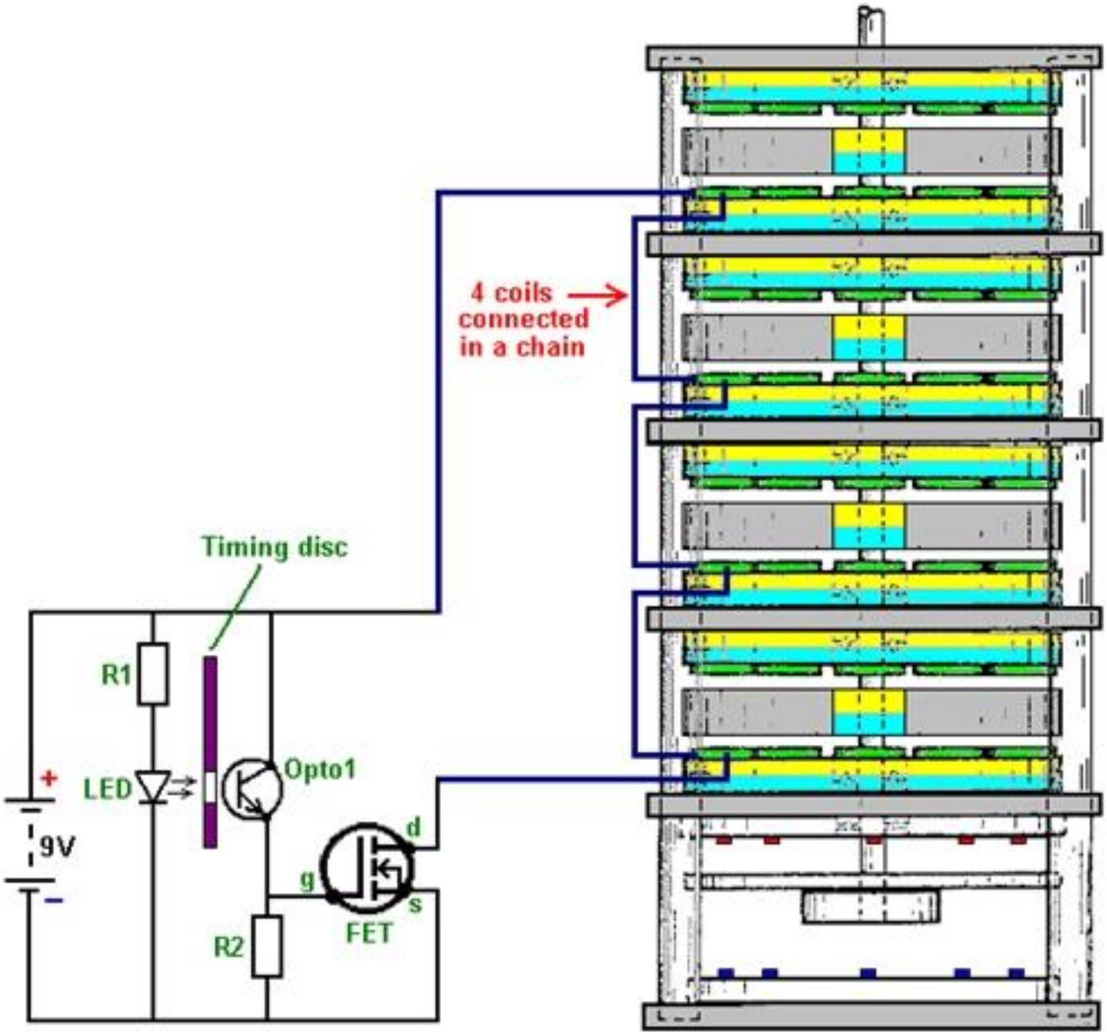
Just five components are used. The current through the coil is controlled by a transistor. In this case it is a FieldEffect Transistor usually called a "FET". The most common type of FET is used, namely an "N-channel" FET which is the rough equivalent to an NPN transistor as described in Chapter 12. A FET of this type is switched off when the voltage on it's "gate" (marked "g" in the diagram) is 2.5 volts or lower. It is switched on when the voltage on it's gate is 4.5 volts or more.

In this circuit we want the FET to switch on when the motor's timing disc is in the right position and be off at all other times. This is arranged by shining the light from a Light-Emitting Diode or "LED" through a hole in the timing disc which rotates with the shaft of the motor. When the hole is opposite the LED for the coil which is to be powered up, light shines through the hole and on to a light-sensitive device, Charles has opted to use a LightSensitive transistor, but a light-dependent resistor such as an ORP12 could be used instead. When the light shines on the "Opto1" device in the circuit diagram, it's resistance falls dramatically, raising the voltage on the gate of the FET and switching it on. When the timing disc hole moves past the LED, the light is cut off and the FET gate voltage drops down, switching the FET off. This arrangement causes the coil of the motor to be switched on and off at just the right time to give a powerful rotation of the motor shaft. In the circuit, the resistor "R1" is there to make sure that the current flowing through the LED is not excessive. The resistor "R2" has a low value compared to the resistance of "Opto1" when no light falls on it, and this holds the gate voltage of the FET down to a low value, making sure that the FET is completely off.

As you can see, this is basically a very simple circuit. However, as one of these circuits is used for each coil (or each pair of coils if there is an even number of coils in this slice of the motor), the circuit in the patent looks quite complicated. It is actually very simple. The resistor "R1" is used to limit the current flow through all of the LEDs used and not just one LED. You could, of course, use one resistor for each LED if you wanted to. The circuit for powering two coils (and not showing the timing disc) looks like this:



The section inside the green dashed line being the identical circuit for the second coil. This addition to the circuit is made for each coil, at which point, the motor is ready to run. If, as would be normal, several layers of magnets are being used, then the coils positioned above each other can be connected in a chain like this:

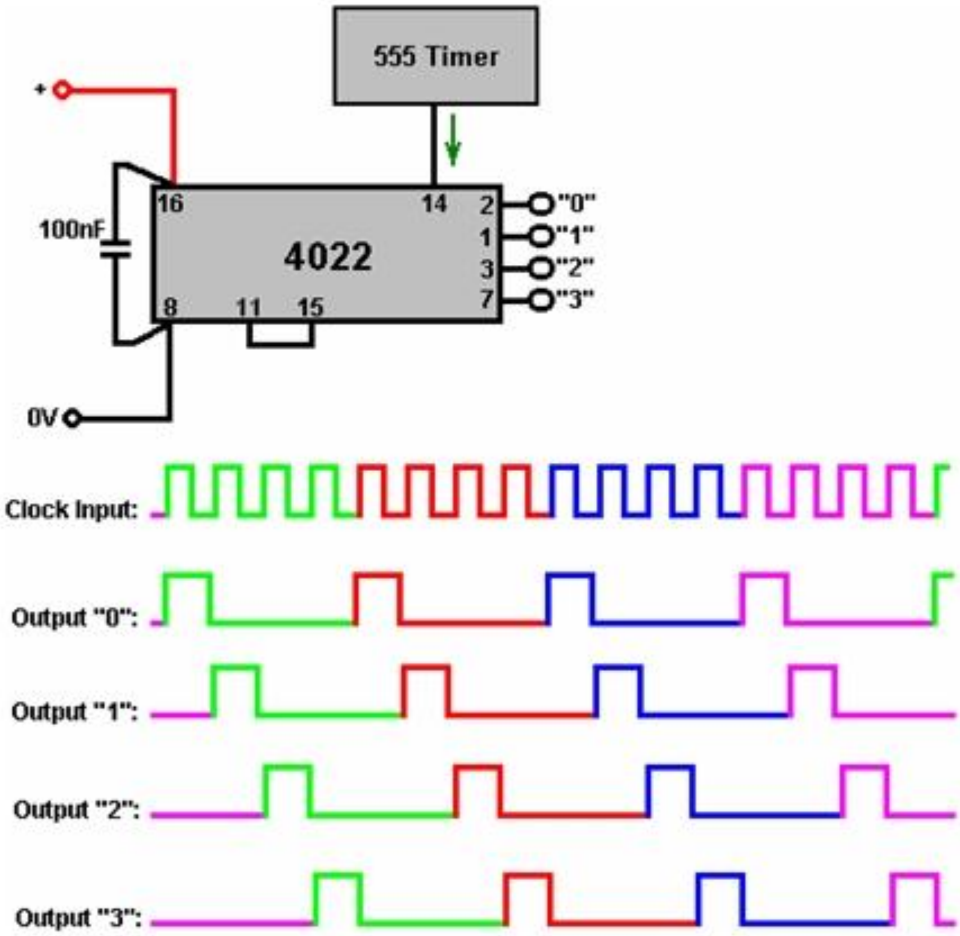


Connecting several coils "in series" (in a chain) like this, reduces the number of electronic components needed and it makes sure that the pulses to each of these coils is at exactly the same instant. Alternatively, it is possible to wire these coils across each other "in parallel", the choice is generally dictated by the resistance of the coils. The patent drawing shown above seems to indicate that there is a big gap between the LEDs and the optical devices. This is probably not the case as most people would choose to keep the gap between the LED and the light-dependent device as small as possible, mounting them so that they are just clear of the timing disc on each side of it.

In this patent, Charles Flynn remarks that this magnet motor can be used for almost any purpose where a motor or engine drive is required and where the amount of energy available or required to produce the driving force may vary little to nil. Charles has produced motors of this type which are capable of rotating at very high speed - 20,000 rpm and with substantial torque. Lesser speeds can also be produced, and the motor can be made to be self-starting. Because of the low power required to operate the device, Charles has been able to operate the motor using just a nine volt, off-the-shelf dry battery.

One application which seems most appropriate for this motor design is the Frenette heater shown in Chapter 14. Using this motor to drive the discs inside the heater drum would produce a heater which appears to be driven by just a nine-volt battery. However, while that is the appearance, the reality is that the power of this motor comes from the permanent magnets and **not** from the battery. The battery current is only used to prevent the backward pull of the magnets and it is **not** used to drive the motor.

While the use of a timing disc is a very satisfactory arrangement, it is also possible to use electronic circuitry instead of the mechanical timing disc, the opto devices and the LEDs. What is needed here is a device which produces a series of voltage pulses which can be used to drive the gate voltage of each FET from below 2.5 volts to over 4.5 volts. It looks as if the well-known 555 timer chip would be suited to this task and it would certainly run off the nine-volt battery. However, we have more than one set of coils which need to be run. For example, if we have say, four sets of coils to drive by powering up four different FET transistors one after the other, then we could use a "Divide-by-Eight" chip, like the 4022 chip. This chip can be set to divide by any number from two to eight. All that is needed to select the number to divide by, is one connection between two of the pins on the chip.



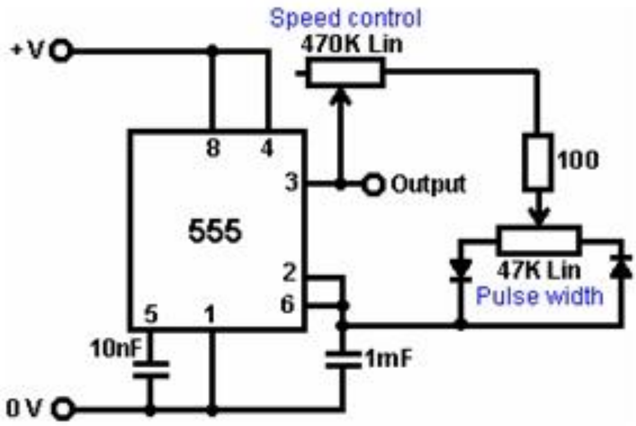
The output voltage on the pins marked "1", "2", "3" and "4" goes high one after the other as shown in the diagram above. So, each of these output pins would be connected to the FET gates in that order and the FETs would get switched on in that same order.

With the 4022 chip, the connections for the rate of division are as follows:

For 'Divide by 7' operation, connect pin 10 to pin 15
For 'Divide by 6' operation, connect pin 5 to pin 15
For 'Divide by 5' operation, connect pin 4 to pin 15
For 'Divide by 4' operation, connect pin 11 to pin 15
For 'Divide by 3' operation, connect pin 7 to pin 15
For 'Divide by 2' operation, connect pin 3 to pin 15

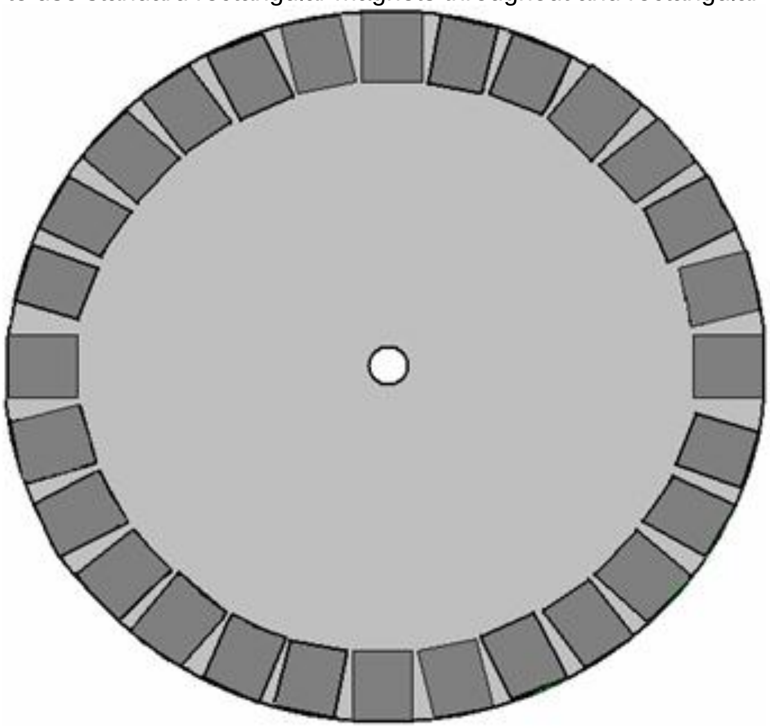
When using a circuit like this, the pulse rate from the 555 chip is set to a very low value like half a second, so that the motor shaft can get started. Once it gets moving, the pulse rate is gradually increased to speed the motor up. One advantage of this method is that it allows speed control, and if the motor was being used to power a Frenette heater, then the speed control would also act as a temperature control for the heater.

A possible 555 chip circuit might be:



As this allows the speed to be controlled and when the required speed is reached, the pulse width can then be adjusted to give the minimum current draw to maintain that speed. There are, of course, many other suitable circuits which could be used instead of this one and Chapter 12 will fill you in on some of them as well as explaining how circuits work and how to build them.

If it so happens that it is difficult to find suitable circular magnets with the poles on opposing faces, then I suggest that it should be possible to use standard rectangular magnets throughout and rectangular coils as shown here:



And while this arrangement is not as magnetically efficient as a circular magnet, it does have the convenience of allowing the construction of a rotor of any chosen size. Ideally, unlike the stator shown above, there should be an odd number of magnets, or failing that, an odd number of coils. Alternatively, the rotor could have an odd number of magnets so as to allow self-starting. But, it should be noted that if the motor is to be driven by an electronic pulsing system, then it is very much more simple to have an even number of magnets on the stator and start the motor moving by hand. This is because with an odd number of stator magnets, the opto sensors are not exactly opposite each other and so do not fire together. With an even number of stator magnets, the coils which are 180 degrees apart can be wired together as they fire at exactly the same time. With the slotted optical timing disc, the slots are exactly opposite each other and match the width of the rotor magnets, but the coils (nearly) opposite each other are not powered on and off at exactly the same time, although their powered arcs are likely to overlap for part of their operation. This could be catered for electronically by using a monostable delay for the coil on the opposite side of the disc.

The objective of each coil is to just, and only just, cancel out the magnetic field of the permanent magnet underneath it. The magnetic field produced by the coil depends on the current flowing in the coil, the number of turns in the coil and the area of the coil. The current flowing depends on the diameter of the wire and the voltage applied to it. It is probably necessary to mount just one magnet on the stator and experiment with the coil until your current drive and coil allow the rotor to spin freely.   Whatever the coil result is, should be ok for all of the magnets even though they are likely to vary in strength a bit.