

INSPIREDFORTUBE

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MOTORBIKE

DREAMS THAT BECOME REALITY

ENERGY

(CON)QUEST OF INDIAN MARKET

FURNITURE

IDEAS IN X Y Z



BLM GROUP



JOB SHOP

CENTRAL TUBE & BAR

The name, Central Tube & Bar, allows to immediately guess that we're talking about a company set up to commercialize tubes and metal bars. However, the need to compete on a market where very large companies operate has led the owner, Dustin Ward, to provide added value to his products by carrying out some machining operations.



MORE COMPETITIVE THAN CHINA

Central Tube & Bar began its activities in 1996 with a band saw in a small garage and a single large customer, Navistar, which produces school buses. "We started with the production of a few components that no one wanted to manufacture", says Dustin Ward, owner of the company. Now the company has two production units in Conway, Arkansas and Tulsa, Oklahoma; a third unit is scheduled to open in Texas. "We did a good job and started a co-operation relationship that continues to this day."

TO GIVE MORE VALUE TO REMAIN COMPETITIVE

"I must honestly say that if I had not invested in Lasertube technology, I would probably no longer be in business today." Dustin Ward relates how he acquired the LT712 system. He says that he saw the LT712 system for the first time in 2006 at a trade fair, and he immediately realized that "This system was the future of the company and of tube processing"; so he decided to buy it. "At that time, we were competing with large companies that marketed tubes with a much higher stock availability than ours. Therefore, I felt that I had to add value to our products in order to remain competitive. Increasing the added value to the product meant earning more compared to selling only the material. We wanted to add value to boost profit margins. I went to the fair to buy a saw but then I fell in love with the LT712. On seeing the machine I immediately noticed the cutting speed, but when I was told that I could reduce the processing time by 60-70% I was sceptical. In the end, however, this is exactly what happened and the labor costs in the facility were actually reduced."

IS SAVING EVIDENT... OR NOT?

Cost reductions derive from many sources: of course speed is one, but also accuracy, which reduces the amount of waste; the reduction of labour costs; the reduction of staff (people who perform repetitive operations such as cutting, drilling etc...). “Nowadays, we load the loader and the machined parts come out of the machine without requiring subsequent operations. It’s scary to think about spending so much money for a machine, but then you see that the cost is more than paid for. I already have several laser systems and I’m not going to stop.” When asking if the average savings on an item have actually been calculated, or whether there are any examples and the answer is disarming, “I do not need to calculate, when a component that was previously manufactured on different machines in 45 minutes, is now finished by one machine in 4 minutes. There is no need to calculate the savings, because it’s pretty obvious...or is it not?”

Time and cost saving

45 → **4** minutes
from down to

with one machine

“We are looking for large volumes, and this is the reason why we mainly address large-sized companies that can guarantee certain numbers.” When we point out that large numbers now seem to be the privilege of other markets, he denies this notion and gives a concrete example to prove his point. Six years ago, Dustin showed a video of the LT712 Lasertube system to a potential client who was producing in China and was having problems with a high rate of rejections and delivery time. The client immediately realized that the LT712 system would change their business. Now Central Tube & Bars produces those components with a 1% scrap rate, within the required times, and with the speed of the LT712 system the company can compete with the Chinese.



Competitive

EACH PIECE IN ITS MACHINE

After the LT712, Dustin bought a BLM GROUP E-TURN 40 bending system, which proved to be very flexible. “The machine was first used in Tulsa to produce the seats of the Navistar school bus for four years until they decided to manufacture the seats with moulds. After the Tulsa job, we brought the bending machine to Conway to make school furniture, beds and many other things”. According to Dustin, the E-TURN system has two strong points:

“ The loading system and the all-electric handling system that ensure repeatability; when we load the loader the machine starts the bending operation to produce pieces that are always good. On that machine we guarantee high tolerance, repeatability and accuracy. ”

“Having to deal with the exaggerated tolerances indicated by the GD&T system (Geometric Dimensioning & Tolerancing) for the automotive industry, we would not have been able to do it if we had a normal bending machine instead of an E-TURN system.”

“When they needed to laser-cut larger size tubes, the BLM GROUP system did not yet have a solution suitable for the required dimensions so we turned to the competition; therefore, as soon as the LT8 system was available, we bought it for Tulsa.

The choice consists in differentiating the machines according to the destination markets of the parts, for each piece its machine.”

TECHNOLOGY AND AUTOMATION

About BLM GROUP Dustin appreciates the “corporate culture” - a term that is very dear to us. And the way we do business. “They are not economical machines, on the contrary they are rather expensive, but they are the best in terms of reliability, repeatability, technology and ease of use. considered while talking about cost.”

“Technology and automation are means to stay on top in the global market. Dustin explains that, in principle, he is not opposed to the fact that some applications have gone to China. This is part of the free market, but he is happy to see that there is a trend that is developing; many of the jobs that “migrated” to China are now returning. This “reversal” is due to home businesses investing in technology and automation. By using the latest technology, the home companies have been able to highlight the obvious flaws of overseas production (long lead times and high percentage of waste).

Dustinbig promoter of a corporate culture where the focus on people is very high. At the end of the interview, Dustin stated that changes in production set-up require a corresponding training of the labour force to operate new machines. “As companies, we have an obligation to train the new generation of workers. BLM GROUP promoted training by offering valuable courses at its American headquarters in Wixom.”

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