

Case Study

Savekers invest in high speed laser tube cutting

(Selective Finance for Investment in England) grant from regional development agency Advantage West Midlands.

Phil Langford, Grants Case Officer at Advantage West Midlands, says: "Savekers identified two laser cutting machines that would enable it to significantly reduce the batch element of the production process. The machines also speed up operations, providing additional capabilities the company previously didn't have."

Savekers commenced its search by comparing the Trumpf TruLaser Tube 5000 with its main competitor, soon concluding that the flexibility of the former machine would be a huge advantage.

"While some batches are high, it is fairly common for us to do 1-off jobs," said Mr Saveker. "Sure enough the machine has a bundle feeder, but the ability to interrupt long runs and manually load small volumes is invaluable to our business."

For laser cutting tubes and profiles, the Trumpf TruLaser Tube 5000 is a flexible, automatic, complete machining system. It can process tube up to 6500 mm in length with wall thickness up to 6.4 mm (mild steel). The machine is available with loading unit and part removal station.

"Whereas we previously bought pre-slotted tube we can now manufacture slots of the desired length and in the exact position required by each customer," says Mr Saveker. "Previously we had to offer 'universal' versions of our slotted tubular products."

Mr Saveker says that speed was the major consideration behind seeking new flat bed profiling capability. Having already decided to buy the Trumpf TruLaser Tube 5000, it made sense to talk to the same supplier about a flat bed partner machine. The preferred model soon emerged as the Trumpf TruLaser 2525.

"We can cut at 200 mm/min using our existing waterjet facility, however the TruLaser 2525 can profile at 20,000 mm/min for some jobs," says Mr Saveker.

The Trumpf TruLaser 2525 can cut



up to 20 mm thick mild steel, 15 mm stainless steel and 10 mm aluminium. Typical Trumpf innovation is applied in the form of an additional Y-axis integrated in the motion unit. Unlike the standard Y axis, it does not move the complete motion unit, only the cutting head. The intelligent application of a double axis greatly increases the dynamics and reaction time of the machine and, particularly on small part geometry, processing time can be reduced by up to 30%.

"The second Y-axis works well for us because most of our details are small," states Mr Saveker.

The majority of the flat material processed by Savekers is 1-6mm thick and because of the high finish demands of its customers (no oxide can be present on the cut edge), both the TruLaser 2525 and TruLaser Tube 5000 are run using nitrogen from Savekers' in-house generating plant. However, in the near future the company is planning to add oxygen capability to allow it to process brass and thicker mild steel.

"Our new Trumpf machines have had a huge impact on our company," states Mr Saveker. "They form an integral part of a major business review, where we have examined our existing product range, stock and customer base."

"We've been static at £4 million turnover for the past 2-3 years but now we are looking to expand. The trend in recent years has been towards low volume, high value work, but this is now reversing and we're going after volume jobs that were previously imported. As part of installing our new Trumpf machines we've had a major shop floor reorganisation so that we are better able to handle larger batches."

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A £655,000 investment in two state-of-the-art CNC laser cutting machines from Trumpf at the Birmingham facility of Savekers, an OEM that supplies its innovative range of architectural metalwork items to a host of industries, has introduced benefits that include an impressive reduction in average cycle times of 50-60% .

Savekers is a £4 million business employing 50 staff. Its architectural metalwork range includes: sliding door and window track products; cabinets and fittings; balustrades and handrails; door furniture and window guards; and disability products. Manufactured largely from tube, plate and sheet steel, all production operations with the exception of powder coating are conducted on-site at the firm's 45,000 sq ft factory. Typically the company sells its products to shopfitters, building merchants and construction firms as well as working with architects for specification on projects.

"The market is very tight at the moment, as it is everywhere, which is why our new Trumpf investments are so important," explains company Chairman Martin Saveker. "The new machines help us compete with higher end imports from competitors based in low cost economies and to take advantage of other factors such as inflation in the Far East, a weakening pound, 12-16 week lead-times and the rising cost of oil for transportation. It all means that many potential customers are looking to source from the UK once again."

Until recently Savekers had no laser cutting facility for tube and relied on an ageing waterjet profiling machine for its plate work. Mr Saveker knew things had to change. "We had to improve productivity, which basically meant generating greater speed to make us more cost-competitive in order to address new markets," he says. "We began by enquiring about a new tube laser as this would have the most significant impact on our business."

Fortunately the company was successful in securing a £90,000 SFIE