

CASE STUDY: Laser tube cutting at the heart of an innovative business

In an area of 120,000 m² half of which is taken up by buildings located near Fiorano in the lowlands of Modena is the main facility of Gruppo System, which also has production facilities in Spain, China and USA. The Group is divided into three divisions: Ceramics, which deals with decorating and automation of ceramic products; Logistics, dedicated to automatic handling systems in various industrial environments and Electronics, which creates control and integration systems for industrial production. The three divisions are characterised by one common denominator: the spirit of innovation.

Mr. Stefani, President of Gruppo System, is a person with much enthusiasm who has followed his passions and turned them into a company of surprising dimensions. With his innovative ideas and just a small loan, he started to create a business that now has a total turnover of almost €280 M and a headcount of 800 employees, half of which are based in Italy. The current company was set up back in 1970 and the first system to be purchased was not a machine tool but an automatic storage system and this was already a sample of the ideas that would have later given life to the “business”; a business that started off by outsourcing in an industrious and dynamic environment in the plains of Modena where there was far from a shortage of craftsmen to outsource the initial ideas and what others could not do was done in-house.

A laser “training ground”

Mr. Stefani is an enthusiast and this spirit lead him to take on the challenge in the laser tube field, but only after being fully convinced of the advantages. “Relations with BLM have been ongoing for 15 years – explains Stefani – during which time I have listened carefully to the description of the machines that were being offered to me and mostly of the opportunities and the vast range of innovations that laser technology could bring to my company”.

“At first, tubes were used for structural steel works and were generally of poor precision and quality, but today the increasing use of laser cutting has raised tube quality. Modern tube designs allow precise structures to be created without the need for expensive



and complicated mechanical processes to be carried out on machine tools”.

Quality without laps

Mr. Stefani is the first to promote innovation in his company and is very careful not just to sit back when a target has been achieved; he is always on the go to reach new horizons. “Others can copy – he says referring to hypothetical competitors – but our ideas by that time are already well ahead”. “When the first laser system (an LT JUMBO 20 for large tubes with diameters of up to 508 mm) was installed we started our training” he says, using the term that perfectly describes the efforts made at the beginning. “You go to a gym to train and, in effect, the initial samples helped in our training, giving us a deep understanding and helping us to seize the potential of the new tool that was available. Today we manage to produce complex structures using fitted tubes with unique reference keys that make fast and accurate assembly possible without errors and with a high final accuracy.”

Initially, the choice of the ADIGE LT JUMBO 20 was made assuming that the weight of the structures produced using tube could be reduced by 40%. The savings from this effectively alone justified the purchase; but looking back, this was perhaps not the most interesting motivation for introducing the laser.

Installation of the second lasertube, an LT8 system with double bundle and single tube loader, added speed and performance with the same tube processing concepts and advantages for the production of smaller tubes. Logistics costs; replacement of boxes with tubes has reduced transport costs. Today, with precise tubes processed by accurate machines, quality can be achieved without the need for additional machining.

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