

Media Release

LPE invests in three new EDM machines from GF Machining Solutions

Hampshire-based Lymington Precision Engineers Co Ltd (LPE), a leading manufacturer of precision machined components, fabrications, assemblies and kit sets for a number of technologically-advanced manufacturing industries and sectors, has recently invested in three new EDM machines from GF Machining Solutions.

The machines – a CUT 400Sp (wire EDM machine); a FORM 300 (spark erosion EDM machine); and a DRILL 20 (EDM hole drill machine) - were installed at the company's facility a little under 12 months ago.

The three machines are being used to machine complex, high-precision profiles and features on a range of production parts for the oil and gas, aerospace and defence, power generation (including the nuclear industry), telecommunications and marine sectors.

They have also strengthened the company's already sophisticated and technologically-advanced in-house 'design-to-manufacture' prototyping and pre-production service which, as Tony Chalk, LPE's managing director explains, "...is a core business area for LPE that differentiates us in the marketplace and is instrumental in us being able to develop strong preferred partner and supply chain relationships with OEMs and Tier 1 and 2 customers in the UK and overseas."

Continuous improvement

The EDM investment is significant but, bearing in mind LPE's commitment to continuous improvement and the company's adherence to best-practice manufacturing principles and methods, is not that surprising.

Indeed the company regularly makes strategic investments in its plant, processes and systems, and people as a route to increasing its productivity and ensuring its long term competitiveness. In recent months and years such investments have included:

- The acquisition of a local jig grinding company;
- The purchase of gun drilling technology;
- The integration of a company-wide ERP system;
- The continuous development of its Apprentice Training Programme.

Prior to investing in the new GF Machining Solutions' machines LPE subcontracted-out a majority of its EDM requirements. (The company did have limited in-house EDM capability but its technology was dated).

Whilst this arrangement was satisfactory in most respects the opportunity to secure more EDM work and the consequent need to ensure that customer lead times and part quality requirements were maintained, resulted in LPE making the decision to develop and strengthen its own EDM capabilities.

Tony Chalk explained:

“There comes a tipping point when it’s more efficient and cost-effective to bring previously subcontracted work back in-house. The emergence of new EDM work, in part fuelled by an increase in demand for our design-to-manufacture services, meant it was time to take the decision to invest in new equipment.”

LPE approached a number of EDM machine tool manufacturers with its requirements. The company not only wanted high-performance, cost-competitive machines that would meet their immediate and future needs but also needed to be convinced about the suppliers’ after-sales services – most notably their technical and applications support, and their machine tool servicing operation.

The EDM machines

The EDM machines purchased from GF Machining Solutions are all high-performance, high-productivity models that feature the latest digital generator technology and powerful controls.

The large capacity FORM 300 spark erosion machine is fast and accurate, and is capable of machining large work-pieces and/or multiple (smaller) jobs in one set-up. It is equipped with an integrated tool (electrode) changer which enables LPE to run the machine unattended at night or over the weekends.

The CUT 400Sp is a versatile high-precision wire EDM machine that can machine large tapers (up to 45 degrees), and has a number of on-board SMART Technology features such Automatic Wire Threading – a necessary pre-requisite for unattended machining operations.

Says Tony Chalk:

“The new EDM machines are proving their worth. As anticipated having the latest EDM technology in-house has helped us predict and control our EDM machining costs, and the efficiency of the new machines means that customer delivery times have improved.

“The machines have also made us more innovative (certainly when it comes to our design-to-manufacture service).

“Not only can we machine delicate and intricate features to high accuracy and exceptional surface finishes – we can also advise (and in some instances educate) our customers’ design teams on what can be achieved and realised using EDM technology (e.g. machining parts with large tapers, thin walls and tight internal radii etc.).”

Other developments

The new GF machining Solutions’ machines have now been bedded in and for LPE there are new developments on the immediate horizon. As well as further machine tool acquisitions which are on-going, these include moving part of its manufacturing operations to a new 30,000 sq ft facility in Lympington in the near future, and the continuing development of its Apprentice Training Programme which has seen the company take on and employ 23 Apprentices since 2006.

Ends

IMAGE CAPTIONS

_MG_5580_01a.jpg and 453A7493.jpg: The large capacity FORM 300 spark erosion machine installed at Lympington Precision Engineers Co Ltd.



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