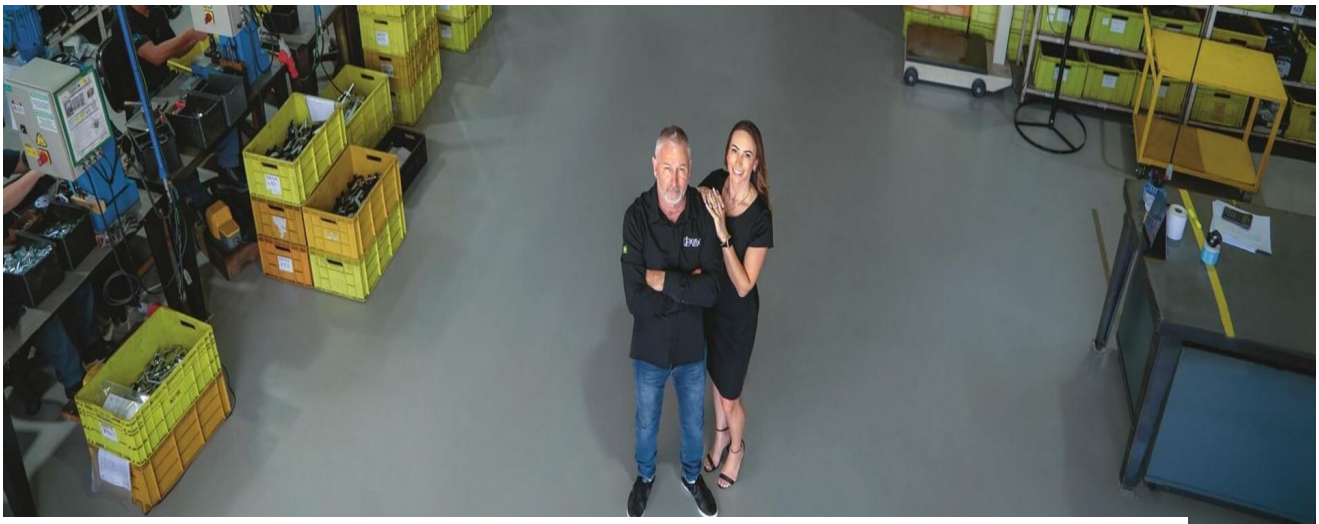


RAMONA HÖNL

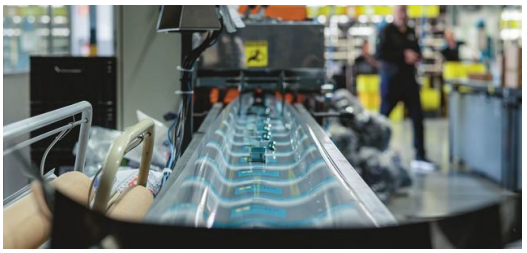
From Unemployment to Market Leader: Clamps for the Whole World

For Juarez Santini, the path to success began with an unexpected shock: in 2004, the family man from Caxias do Sul in Brazil suddenly lost his job as a sales manager. Fortunately, Santini is not the type to give up when crisis strikes. A man of action who prefers to take his destiny into his own hands, he decided to take a gamble and set up his own company, Kifix. Santini would subsequently go on to transform this business into Brazil's market leader in toggle clamps. And right at the heart of the company, he says, are his two TRUMPF laser cutting machines.

One question changed everything

Home to over half a million people, Caxias do Sul is a vibrant industrial hub in southern Brazil, roughly 170 kilometres from the Atlantic coast and around 550 from the Uruguayan border. It's a well-known place in the Brazilian welding trade, familiar to anyone looking for reliable clamping fixtures. This is Santini's home turf, and it was here that he founded Kifix, the country's leading manufacturer of toggle clamps. It all started with a casual enquiry. Finding himself out of work, Santini initially struck out on his own selling tools. Then one day a customer asked for a specific type of clamp. This was uncharted territory for Santini, but he immediately commis sioned a design and had the clamp manufactured at a job shop. The customer was delighted – and Santini even more so. He could see immediately that purpose-built clamping fixtures would give sheet-metal fabricators a serious competitive edge. And so Kifix and its clamping business were born. Its mission? To offer the right clamp for every welding job – whether large or small, heavy or light, square or round – and to support businesses across the full spectrum of professional welding work.

The company run by Juarez Santini and his daughter Caroline manufactures about 30,000 clamps per month.



Modern Manufacturing: The packaging of the terminals is automated. Production uses laser technology from TRUMPF.

Clamping devices in 1,500 variants

Today, Kifix manufactures around 1,500 different products across a 1,500-square-metre facility equipped with state-of-the-art TRUMPF laser technology. Its core business is toggle clamps – more than 1,000 variants. “We produce approximately 30,000 clamps a month, and we have around 80 percent of the Brazilian market," says Felipe Gobbi, who heads international sales at Kifix. “Globally, we’re on a strong growth trajectory. We deliver to more than 50 countries, including Uruguay, Chile and Mexico, as well as Europe and the US.”

TRUMPF laser cutting machines have played a pivotal role in the Kifix success story. In 2012, Santini purchased a TruLaser 1030, which at the time was equipped with a CO2 laser. That investment marked a decisive leap forward: Kifix no longer had to source punched sheet-metal parts from suppliers, because everything could now be manufactured in-house. “TRUMPF’s high-precision laser technology helped us raise our game in terms of quality, product variety and performance. The finish on the parts improved dramatically, and it made us completely independent of suppliers,” Santini says.

Precision-made powerhouses

“We have the strongest clamps on the market,” says Vertriebsleiter Gobb. Kifix’s most powerful clamp can exert a clamping force of up to 40,000 newtons – roughly the weight of an adult Asian bull elephant balancing on the workpiece on one foot. “Key to achieving this are the holes in the sheet metal; only TRUMPF laser cutting machines provide the precision we need to make the moving parts fit together perfectly and generate such high forces,” says Gobbi.

> **Without TRUMPF, we wouldn't be where we are today.**
>
> Juarez Santini, Founder and CEO of Kifix

Doubling down on productivity: from morning order to evening delivery

In 2021 and 2023, Kifix replaced its CO2 machine with two TruLaser 1030 fiber systems. This is the perfect model for manufacturers like Kifix, who make large quantities of small parts. The modern solid- state laser makes this generation of machines both low-maintenance and highly energy-efficient, and Kifix was also impressed by the rapid cycle times. The quick-fastening clamp market is a fast-moving business, and many customers who place an order in the morning expect to receive the goods by the end of the day.

Laser tech makes custom clamps commercially viable

The TRUMPF machines also gave Kifix another unique selling point. "We're the only manufacturer of toggle clamps in Brazil that works with laser cutting machines," says Santini proudly. This gives the company a major edge in terms of flexibility, as a laser cutting machine can quickly adapt the part geometry or adjust the dimensions without the need for a tool change. "If a customer needs a bespoke clamp, we can deliver within ten days. We don't have to worry about minimum order quantities because even low-volume production is still commercially viable," he adds.

TRUMPF machines at the heart of the company

Santini was impressed by the precision, reliability and productivity of TRUMPF machines from the moment he saw them. And he immediately knew that the German high-tech company was the right choice. "Our TRUMPF machines are at the heart of Kifix. We wouldn't be where we are today without them," says Santini. Without that investment, he feels the company would have gradually lost the ability to compete on price and part quality. Instead, it now sets the pace in the market, and Kifix is the yardstick by which other clamp companies measure their performance.

Planning is everything: Kifix can deliver bespoke clamps to customer specifications in as little as ten days. With laser-based manufacturing, even small batches are commercially viable.

Focus on quality: Father and daughter both understand the importance of precision-made components. For Kifix, it's the key to making the strongest clamps on the market.

Caroline Santini represents the next generation of leadership at Kifix.

The success story continues

After 22 years running Kifix, Santini is looking to gradually step back from his leadership role. The next generation is ready to take the helm in the form of his daughter, Caroline. She began pitching in as a teenager after school, and now she is steadily taking on more responsibility as general manager. For her, one of the key benefits of the TRUMPF partnership is the after-sales service. "The support is first-class. With every machine we've bought, the team has always taken the time to tailor everything exactly to our needs," she says. With Caroline now part of the management team, her father's legacy is in safe hands. It's a success story that shows how a healthy dose of passion, courage and precision can lead to truly remarkable results.

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SPOKESPERSON FOR MACHINE TOOLS