

Press Release



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TRUMPF HELPS DESIGNPLAN SEE PUNCHING IN A NEW LIGHT

Designplan Lighting Ltd, a world leading designer and manufacturer of robust lighting solutions for demanding environments, has invested in a TRUMPF TruPunch 3000 to replace two older turret punch machines supplied by another machine provider. The move has led to a plethora of important benefits, not least a significant increase in productivity, a reduction in the amount of manual labour required, fewer secondary operations and lower noise levels.

Sutton-based Designplan commenced operations in 1963 with an idea for a great product: an extra strong light fitting engineered to withstand the most severe environmental conditions, including those found in transport, social housing and custodial settings. Just to prove the strength of that idea, the company today has over 120 staff and a turnover of circa £18 million.

In 2011, the company was acquired by the Sweden-based Fagerhult group, which was followed three years later by relocation to a purpose-built factory. This intense period of change spurred growth at Designplan, as Production Engineering Manager Rob Aldred explains.

“I joined the company seven years ago, when turnover stood at around £11 million,” he says. “Since then, this figure has increased by an impressive 64%. Investment gave us more aspiration to grow and more scope to diversify.”

From the start, Mr Aldred’s role has been to tackle and reduce lead times. A big part of this remit involves reviewing the internal manufacturing processes at Designplan on an almost continuous basis. Recently, attention shifted to the company’s punching operations.

“We had two older turret punches that began causing problems, particularly in terms of reliability,” he says. “In addition, as we started adopting more bespoke work, the number of tool changes became prohibitive to achieving the levels of throughput required.”

When one of the machines stopped working altogether, the decision was made to call time and invest in a better resource. However, there was a caveat.

“We didn’t want a like-for-like solution, we wanted to move forward and bring in a machine that could increase productivity and reduce our second operation work,” explains Mr Aldred. “To make sure we got the right machine, we looked at all the major players and TRUMPF came out on top, not just for flexibility, speed and efficiency, but for our entire wish list.”

The TRUMPF TruPunch 3000 offers backlash-free drives that enable high acceleration in all axes, while the high rotational speed of the C axis enables extremely fast tapping and the productive processing of complex contours. Thanks to the powerful electric punching head, users can punch at up to 1000 strokes per minute, and mark parts at 2500 strokes per minute.

Further attributes of the machine include SheetMaster, which loads and unloads the TruPunch, and can optionally be equipped with an integrated tool magazine. On the subject of tools, all those loaded to the punching head rotate by 360° to enhance both capability and flexibility. Users also benefit from the SortMaster Box Linear, which sorts components that fall through the large part flap into up to four boxes. In addition, energy bills will be lower as, thanks to an average power input of only 5.6kW, the TruPunch 3000 is very energy efficient.

Installed in May 2019, the machine has been set to work producing main bodies for the company’s light fittings, along with internal metalwork such as gear trays and brackets. Typical materials include zintec from 0.9 to 3.0mm thick, and aluminium from 1.2 to 4.0mm.

“In particular, the new TRUMPF TruPunch has taken a big bite out of our studding and bushing requirements, and this will continue as we move through parts, while noise levels have reduced dramatically,” says Mr Aldred. “Overall, we are two or three levels up on where we were – across all aspects of our punching operations.”

Ease of use is cited as another stand-out feature of the TruPunch 3000. In total, three operators have been trained on the machine’s operation.

“Our target was to hit 50% of production levels within the first month, but after the third week we were already at 80%,” says Mr Aldred. “The machine has been fantastic – we really can’t fault it.”

Moving forward, the ISO9001-accredited company is planning to invest in TRUMPF TruTops programming software.

“We will upgrade to TruTops Boost in 2020,” confirms Mr Aldred. “Once installed, our ERP system will read orders, generate a list of parts required for manufacture and send them to the TruPunch, where TruTops Boost will automatically nest the components and commence the punching process. This will spell the end of manual programming at Designplan.”

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