

Press Release

TRUMPF

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TRUMPF TRULASER AT TW METALS IS "GAME CHANGER"

TW Metals, a leading supplier of high-performance metals with a global turnover of £710 million, has invested in a new 10kW TRUMPF TruLaser 3060 fiber for one of its UK facilities. The company describes the large 6m bed laser cutter, which is the first of its type in the UK, as a "game changer" as it has eliminated the time/cost issues associated with using subcontract resources and is now fulfilling next-day delivery demands.

The origins of TW Metals are traceable back to 1907, in Pittsburgh, USA, when Williams & Company began trading. A merger with Tubesales in 1997 prompted a name change to TW Metals, while 2005 saw the company purchased by O'Neal Steel and become part of what is now the High Performance Metals Group of O'Neal Industries. Today, TW Metals has over 400 employees across 30 locations in North America, Europe and Asia.

The market segment occupied by the Speciality Distribution business unit of TW Metals has particular focus on materials for critical and hazardous environments, often in sectors such as nuclear, petrochemical, oil and gas, medical and automotive (a separate business unit serves the aerospace industry).

"We're far from a standard stockholder," explains Mike Street, Vice President Europe - Speciality Distribution. "We talk to our customers about their pain points and issues, from which we create material proposals that include service provision to manage flow through their supply chain."

Introducing a state-of-the-art laser cutter to its repertoire of services was a natural step for this progressive-thinking company, which is both ISO9001 and AS9100 accredited.

Explains Mr Street: "The provision of machined or first-stage components is becoming an increasingly common request. We had a plasma cutter for this purpose, but knew a laser cutter would be ideal for our corrosion-resistant and heat-resistant nickel alloys, which extend from thin gauge sheet up to 30mm thick. It would also help us introduce other product ranges, like thin gauge sheets in stainless steel and aluminium."

David Ellis, Head of Operations - Europe, adds: "We looked at nine machines, ultimately shortlisting two, one of which was the 10kW TRUMPF TruLaser 3060 fiber. During demonstrations of the two machines, the TruLaser stood out. Certain nickel alloys are notoriously difficult to cut, but in the trials, TRUMPF simply programmed the parts on the day we arrived and cut them beautifully, without any subsequent tweaking of parameters. This was not the case with the other machine we trialled. Also, the price of the TRUMPF package was more competitive."

Selecting the 6m bed option for the TruLaser 3060 fiber provides TW Metals with a market advantage as it can handle much larger raw material. In addition, the company can get preferential pricing from the mills as they have less processing to undertake, while the large bed also means TW Metals can accommodate four or five large offcuts simultaneously for overnight cutting, should the need arise.

The TRUMPF TruLaser 3060 fiber arrived in December 2020 – ahead of schedule – and is now busy cutting at the company's Longbridge, West Midlands site. TRUMPF UK completed effective and COVID-safe installation, commissioning and training before Christmas.

"We got our first order for the machine almost immediately and began production work at the start of January 2021," says Mr Ellis. "The operators love it; the TruTops nesting software is so easy to use and gives great sheet utilisation for customers."

To provide an indication of capability, the 10kW TRUMPF TruLaser 3060 fiber can process stainless steel up to 30mm thick. Stand-out features include the proprietary Highspeed Eco function, which is helping users such as TW Metals to consume up to 70% less gas while simultaneously achieving 100% higher productivity and feed rate.

"Although the TruLaser is not yet fully utilised we're filling it much faster than we anticipated," says Mr Street. "We have a budget for the machine and we've managed to exceed that every month so far. Whereas our previous plasma machine would just cut blocks, the TruLaser has added new dimensions in terms of design and intricate profiling that the plasma was unable to offer, not to mention the dramatically faster cutting speed."

TW Metals delivers on a next-day basis, so reaction time is key to meeting the service demands of customers.

"The TruLaser 3060 fiber is a game-changer for our customer service because we were previously having to use a subcontractor whenever a request came in for laser-cut parts," concludes Mr Ellis. "These parts were sometimes taking weeks to arrive and, because we were a small customer to the subcontractor, we were never top of their priority list. The arrival of the TRUMPF machine has changed all that."

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