Oppenländer

CATHARINA DAUM

Making short work of it

Stefan and Christoph Sigel are young — and successful. In just five years, the brothers from the Swabian town of Heimsheim have turned their part-time company in a garage into a successful job shop.

Cut back to the year 2009. The brothers' father and uncle asked whether they didn't want to take over the small workshop where they mounted components for customers in the HVAC field. Christoph and Stefan did not hesitate long. They both grew up in the tiny corrugated metal shop and had actually earned their first cash there evenings and in school vacations. And this although Stefan Sigel was still in his apprenticeship as an industrial mechanic and Christoph was studying mechanical engineering. Christoph Sigel: "We really didn't have anything to our credit except a bit of confidence within the HVAC industry. Our father had made his mark there."

"When making investment decisions, we never wavered and instead listened to our gut feelings."

But this part-time job quickly became a serious adventure. This partnership gave rise to a LLC, the SCS Metall GmbH. In June of 2010 Christoph Sigel abandoned the mechanical engineering curriculum to become self-employed while Stefan launched a mammoth effort — starting his apprenticeship position in the early morning and then working for five or six hours in their own company. For both of them, days lasting 12 to 14 hours were more the rule than the exception. But this commitment paid off. While in 2010 a single TRUMABEND V 85 was used in job shop operations, today there are three press brakes, a TruPunch 5000 and — something quite new: a TruLaser 3030 fiber laser cutting machine that is linked into a laser network with a TruLaser Robot 5020 for laser welding. The road to this stellar equipment was determined by the brothers' hands-on approach. Stefan Sigel: "When making investment decisions, we never wavered and instead listened to our gut feelings. And often, we were simply lucky and profited from a father who opened the occasional door for us."

Seizing the opportunity

The bending machines and the TruPunch 5000 punching machine are all pre-owned. In some cases they were purchased from a dealer, sometimes directly from another company. “We never regretted starting out with these TRUMPF machines. They are all extremely reliable. To name just one example, the punching machine (built in 2006) has served us since the spring of 2011, ten hours a day on average, and with-out any problems at all.” The baptism by fire for this machine took place right after it was installed. A huge order occupied almost all of the machine’s capacities. The job, destined for Oslo, Norway, was to cut a complex pattern of holes in a façade measuring 27,000 square meters. This exceptional job ran for a good two years. Here, in addition, 55,000 complex brackets were bent and a second press brake was purchased. “And, to top it off, new customers kept knocking at our door, all in one fell swoop,” Christoph Sigel recalls. “By the start of 2013, we had reached the limits of capacities at the old site.”

WHO

SCS Metall GmbH, Heimsheim. Founded 2009. 15 employees. www.scs-metall.de

WHAT

Job shop with a wide range of capabilities, from prototypes to mass production

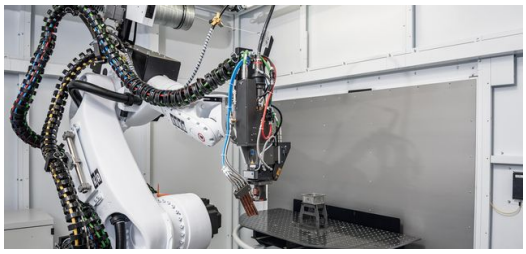
HOW

TruLaser Robot 5020 and TruLaser 3030 fiber in a laser network, TruPunch 5000, 3 x TruBend press brakes, TruMark Station 5000 marking laser

The application for a building permit was almost finished, since the Sigels had decided to erect a new structure. But things turned out differently. Shortly before submitting their application, a friend and businessman offered his own building. Stefan Sigel: “Everything fit perfectly. The layout and the □oor space were almost identical to our planning. And so we decided to lease that building right away and, by doing so, saved ourselves the stress of a construction project.” A small side effect of the relocation in mid-2013: In the new building in Heimsheim there was an old laser cutting machine that Sigels took over. “We weren’t planning to start in laser cutting, but we took advantage of the situation and gradually entered the market.” And again, a suitable order arrived at just the right time — a long run of shim washers, between 0.1 and 0.2 millimeters thick, for transmissions. But that elderly machine was no longer the perfect unit for this delicate task.

In spite of the fact that another machine tool manufacturer was close by, the Sigels traveled to the TRUMPF show room in Ditzingen. The quality of the specimen parts was just as convincing as the rugged engineering of the TruLaser 3030 fiber. “The machine is really made for shop use. Every detail has been thought out entirely,” acknowledges Christoph Sigel. “I was particularly impressed by the Drop&Cut function, an unrivaled solution for quick post-production.” Drop&Cut uses a camera to transmit a live picture of the machine’s interior right to the display at the control terminal. A mouse click or touching the screen is su□cient to project the geometry of the desired part onto the remaining plate. Parts can be positioned and turned, inside the camera’s field of view, on the sheet metal. Here outlines can be rotated, shifted, copied or deleted as desired. Christoph Sigel: “Post-production couldn’t be any easier.”

Christoph Siegl is particularly impressed by the Drop&Cut function, an unrivaled solution for quick post-production. Picture: Peter Oppenländer



The laser network, serving a TruLaser 3030 □ber and a TruLaser Robot 5020, expands the range of services offered by SCS by adding laser cutting and welding. Picture: Peter Oppenländer

A clear line brings about security

Three weeks after the tests, a decision was made in favor of a brand-new TruLaser 3030 fiber and, just a week later, the order was expanded to include a TruLaser Robot 5020, to be integrated into the laser network. The reason: There was another order in the o□ng. This time it was for a series of electrical junction boxes. In August of 2015, the new pair of machines had been installed together with the laser net-work, and the large order for cutting and welding was already in its pilot run. Christoph Sigel: "In this way we could approach the subject of laser welding cautiously."

If they are asked why they have all their equipment from a single source, it is not technician Christoph Sigel who has an answer at the ready, but instead management expert Stefan: "After just a few minutes I can deal with the uniform control concepts used for all the machines and master the most important buttons and commands." Stefan Sigel also has a word of praise for the TRUMPF Bank: "Our experience with classic banks has largely been unfavorable. At TRUMPF Bank, we quickly found that the advisors understand our business."

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