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Interface Precision benefits from investment

Interface Precision Engineering was created in 2011 as the precision machining division of the Interface Group, it now operates as standalone business specialising in the manufacture of parts for the scientific instrument sector, motorsport and general sub-contracting, machining materials as diverse as aluminium, steels, refractories (Niobium, Tantalum, Molybdenum, Titanium etc.), copper, brass, plastics (PTFE, Nylon Acetyl etc.) and ceramics.

Interface Precision's customer base includes the Ministry of Defence, CERN, STFC (Science Technologies Facilities Council), so the demands placed on it are varied, with tight tolerance work being common and batch sizes tending to be relatively small, through to more open tolerance work with much higher batch quantities. As a result it finds itself frequently setting machines and its machining capacity reflects these demands. Emphasis is placed on ease of use of machine controls and the capability of the machine itself, the result is that XYZ Machine Tools has become a key supplier of machining centre and turning centre capacity to Interface Precision, with the company having seven XYZ machine on its plant list.

One of its more recent acquisitions was an XYZ TC 320 LTY turning centre with its 100 mm y-axis capability. "Having the y-axis capability allows us to be much more competitive, even though we can charge a higher hourly rate for the machine. This is down to the versatility of being able to reduce work in progress by eliminating set-ups as we can machine many more features in a single hit with the y-axis and live tooling on all 12 turret positions," says Interface Precision's Mel Meader. "The machine is also well built meaning that it is man enough for all the jobs that we put on it, and on longer batch runs we are confident that it



will hold size throughout the day with very few offsets required from switching it on in a morning to the end of the shift.”

As with all of XYZ Machine Tools’ turning centres the TC 320 LTY makes use of the Siemens 840D ShopTurn control, which Interface Precision take full advantage of, making use of its ability to mix conversational and G-code programming and the wide range of canned cycles available as standard, with machine operator Nick describing it as ‘the best control I’ve ever used’. Backing up this ease of use is a highly capable machine design with a bar capacity of 78mm, turning capacity of 320mm diameter and with a powerful 45hp/3300 revs/min spindle, with the y-axis capable of +/- 50 mm of movement above and below the centreline and each turret position having a 6 kw/4000 revs/min spindle for live tooling and on machine tool probing..

In addition to XYZ turning centres, Interface Precision also has a number of XYZ machining centres, the most recent being an XYZ 710 VMC, with another about to be installed. The XYZ 710 VMC is one of the most popular machines in the XYZ machining centre range thanks to its machining envelope and overall capability and price point. As with all XYZ machining centres it is constructed around a solid cast base creating a robust 4000 kg machining platform. Other standard features are the 20 hp /8000 revs/min spindle, 24 position tool carousel, with toolchange times (tool to tool) of 2.5 seconds, axis travel is on hardened box ways and the maximum feedrate is 20 m/min in all axes. Components weighing up to 500 kg can be machined on the 760 mm by 430 m table, with axis travels of 710 x 450 x 500 mm (x, y, z).

“The XYZ VMCs have certainly impacted on our business and we are really pleased with them as we have seen cycle times reduced through a combination of improved capability, quicker toolchanges and the capability of the Siemens control. All in all we are extremely happy with the XYZ machines we have, they do exactly what we want them to do, they are easy to program and operate, the y-axis on the turning centres is a major advantage and our business has grown since we first started using them and we are looking to extend our operating hours from 13 hours per day through to 16 hours, much of which can be put down

to the success we are having with the XYZ turning and machining centres,” says Lee Parnell, Production Director, Interface Precision.

Images:



Top left: An XYZ TC 320 LTY one of two XYZ turning centres at Interface Precision
Top right: Tool probing has helped save set-up time for Interface Precision
Bottom: a selection of components produced on the XYZ TC 320 LTY



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