



Real-Life Stories

Saving Time with HAIMER Shrink Fit System at Westminster Tool

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Westminster Tool in Plainfield, Connecticut is a family-run business founded by Ray Coombs in 1997 in his basement. In 2003, the company made the move to a brand new, state-of-the-art facility that allowed them to grow and showcase their skills. They expanded their offering from injection-mold systems to composite tooling and high-performance component production for the aerospace industry.

As the skilled labor gap grew, Westminster Tool realized that in order to sustain their business for the long run, they needed a way to reach the new generation of machinists. For five years, the company decided to pause their capital investments and increase their human capital investments. During this time, Westminster Academy was born, an internal onboarding and cross-training platform that each employee uses to develop and track their skills, regardless of their department. This way the whole workforce has a documented way to train more consistently on Westminster Tool's processes so that they can serve their customers better.

Once Westminster Academy was fully in place, Westminster Tool decided to invest 10% of its revenue back into equipment, primarily in hard milling and high-speed CNC machining. When they committed to the purchase, they started to realize that they needed tool holders that could support their new equipment. Before 2020, Westminster Tool relied heavily on collets and side-locking holders, which have to be trammed in. This process would always take very long to switch out tools but was also inconsistent, since each user could set up the tools differently. It was especially hard to train employees on this tool holder system because of how much effort it takes to set up the tool in collets.

When they started to look for solutions, HAIMER was recommended. Colby Coombs, Chief Financial Officer and son of Ray Coombs, started doing some research and connected with Mike O'Connor, Regional Sales Manager for Haimer USA who introduced him to shrink fit technology. After hearing about the benefits from Mike and seeing the technology in action, Westminster Tool decided to invest in the HAIMER Power Clamp Special Edition and HAIMER Standard Shrink Fit tool holders.

Soon after Mike trained the Westminster Tool team on the new equipment, they started to see the benefits firsthand. "We have seen close to a 40% increase in tool life now after switching to HAIMER products," Colby says. "We are easing away from collet-style tool holders every single time and we are replacing them with HAIMER."

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Colby Coombs
Chief Financial Officer

The biggest benefit for Westminster Tool was the time savings. Prior to HAIMER, it took about 30 minutes for an apprentice to correctly tram in a tool into a collet chuck, but now the whole process of grabbing the tool and shrinking it in takes about two minutes. “In manufacturing, you are focusing on reducing setup time and running operations as lean as possible. One massive waste is the amount of time it takes to set up these tools, especially in the production environment where we have new hires and those new to the industry,” describes Colby. “So, by being able to use a simpler system we reduce setup time, reduce training time, all while increasing accuracy by having the tool be a great fit every time.”

In addition, the HAIMER shrink fit system allows machinists at any skill level to set up tools the same way every time. This reduces the amount of errors and, in turn, the amount of scrap material from those errors. “The repeatability has been incredible,” Colby states. “Our processes need standardization, and you need to make sure that your tool is in the right place at the right stick-out length. Using the HAIMER shrink fit technology has been fantastic at achieving repeatability and at improving our manufacturing capabilities internally.” Training on the use of the HAIMER shrink fit system is now its own course and a requirement of Westminster Academy. So far, Colby proudly shared that 80% of their employees can easily change out tools using the equipment.

It is also hard to quantify how the unbalance and runout in the collect chucks was affecting Westminster Tool’s production. “With shrink fit, Westminster Tool got rid of the runout,” Mike explains. “Also, with the previous system, the company had vibration with their drills but with HAIMER, they have less of that, so they are seeing much smoother, straighter cuts because of HAIMER’s connection to the spindle and the balance.”

Westminster Tool continues to buy new HAIMER tool holders while looking forward to showing customers and peers their new equipment when tours resume. “I would recommend the HAIMER shrink fit system to anyone,” Colby states. “Investing in Haimer has helped us in so many ways.”

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