



Machining

Need to Focus on Making Chips? MSC Metalworking Pros Can Help Drive Productivity

James Langford | Mar 11, 2025

For machine shops, making money is all about making chips. Meeting customer deadlines and producing finished workpieces requires CNC equipment to keep running—preferably at peak performance levels.

When delayed maintenance or malfunctions force a prolonged shutdown, business owners continue to rack up costs but lose a source of revenue to cover them. Marketplace challenges such as inflation, fueled partly by tariffs and supply-chain disruptions, exacerbate the damage for businesses that are short-staffed because fewer entry-level employees are available to replace experienced veterans as they retire.

MSC Industrial Supply Co. is ready to help, with a team of experienced metalworking specialists who can not only offer advice on maximizing machine performance and taking advantage of new technologies but also work to minimize downtime.

Available services range from coating and grinding to metrology equipment calibration and repair, along with metalworking fluids management. Thanks to the *purchase of Tru-Edge*, a cutting-tool firm with clients in industries from aerospace to auto manufacturing, MSC can even design and produce custom tools for manufacturers with unique needs.

“We’ve built these services to help manufacturers maintain competitiveness during any type of market, whether they’re facing economic pressures or competitive pressures,” says Dr. Michael Gomez, principal research and development engineer with MSC. “Many of our specialists have come from machine shops; they’re people who have lived and breathed machining and manufacturing for a very long time and have a tremendous amount of knowledge at their fingertips.”

MSC’s proprietary offerings include the *Accupro[®] ST Series*, a 3-piece milling assembly that comes pre-set, pre-balanced and ready to use; and *MillMax[®]*, which measures the vibration response of a cutting tool-holder-machine combination. Measurements are funneled into a dashboard that maps out regions

of stable cutting and identifies optimal machining parameters.

"It's one of the ways that MSC helps customers do more with less," Gomez explains. "One MillMax[®] test, on average, delivers about 80 hours of production capacity back to a customer per year, and it only takes about 15 minutes."

Because CNC machines are large capital investments, shops are reluctant to shut them down, Gomez acknowledges. Recouping the investment requires operating the machines as much as possible.

"In this case, however, we're asking you to stop for about 15 minutes and what you get in return is about two weeks of extra time," he says. "It's a really, really unique value proposition."

Custom-Fit Tools

Along with in-house services, MSC has teamed with external companies to help its customers.

One such partnership, with software provider Autodesk, enables MSC specialists to leverage the firm's Fusion computer-assisted design tools to help customers develop potential programming, machining and toolpath optimization strategies, Gomez explains.

"It's another differentiating piece of technology that we're putting into the hands of our metalworking specialists that will allow them to help drive productivity at the spindle," he says.

Another partnership, with Transcat, provides calibration and repair of testing and measurement equipment. Options range from on-site work to shipping tools to one of Transcat's accredited facilities for maintenance.

With the 2023 acquisition of Tru-Edge, meanwhile, MSC gained the ability to offer precision regrinds and PVD coatings along with bespoke tools. Tru-Edge's facilities include a manufacturing/regrind facility in St. Henry, Ohio, as well as an indexable tool repair shop in Dayton, Ohio.

A large part of Tru-Edge's business is focused on designing and producing tools from scratch, with a strong focus on the automotive and medical markets.

"Tru-Edge products aren't things you can buy from a catalog," says the firm's president, Marc Steimer. "They need to be designed to a customer's part print."

As for custom regrinding, Tru-Edge began offering that after the introduction of CNC equipment built for the job prompted manufacturers to outsource such work. It had, in many cases, been handled previously by in-house machinists.

"Our message when we talked to customers was, 'Concentrate on your niche and let us take care of these other tasks,'" Steimer says. Since then, cutting tools have only grown progressively more complex—a development compounded by the increasing number of material-specific tools—which increases the demand for Tru-Edge services.

"The more complex the tools are, the tougher it is for manufacturers" to regrind them in house, he says. "Tru-Edge has engineers who can study the tools and figure out" how to deliver regrinds comparable to original manufacturing specifications.

'Focus on Making Money'

High-quality regrinds are important since lower-quality repairs can increase the odds of tool failure, which may not only force machinists to scrap workpieces made from costly metals but also damage valuable equipment.

Improperly maintained metalworking fluids can also harm equipment, a risk heightened by the widening shortage of experienced machinists who understand the importance of optimal fluid care.

MSC helps bridge that gap through its partnership with Fluid Service Technologies, a firm that provides cleaning services from consultation and coolant analysis to complete on-site maintenance of manufacturing facilities' metalworking fluids.

Fluid Service Technologies can customize its services for businesses from small shops to large metalworking plants with hundreds of machines, says Kelly King, the vice president of operations.

"When we come in, we build out a program—a scope of work—tailored to the customer," he says. "We want to make sure we're touching all the pain points, whether those are bacteria buildup, rust or downtime for cleaning, and developing a benchmark of how much they're spending on fluid maintenance so we can find savings to offset the cost of our labor or at least reach a break-even point."

As a result, Fluid Service Technologies can reduce the time machine-shop employees are spending on maintenance, enabling them to focus on machining and production.

"We can tell customers, 'Let us handle this for you,'" King says. "'You focus on what's making money for you.'"

What outside services would help your machine shop focus on making chips? Tell us in the comments below.

www.mscdirect.com/betterMRO

Copyright ©2024 MSC Industrial Supply Co.