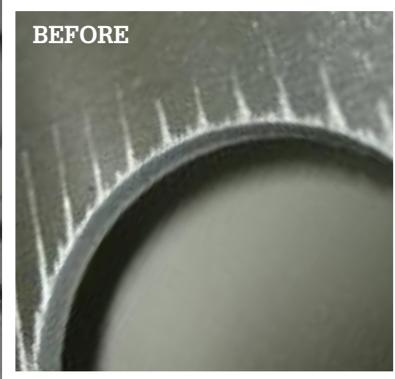


Stamped aluminum before and after being polished and brush-finished by a Timesavers machine.



BEFORE



AFTER



This laser-cut mild steel was processed with a Puma series deburring and finishing machine.



A reliable FINISH

The Puma series deburring and finishing machine from **Timesavers** expands shop floor possibilities

The name says it all. Timesavers Inc., Maple Grove, Minn., is a manufacturer of wide-belt sanders for deburring and finishing applications, and it seeks to make dependable, low-maintenance machines that save customers time and energy.

“Usually, our customers have other [processes] downstream of what our machine is doing, whether it’s adding value or putting a finish, or they’re waiting for parts coming through our machine to get a final product out the door,” says Jon Hill, regional sales manager for Timesavers. “We don’t want our machine to be the holdup for them not to ship product, so we’re very sensitive to service issues and making sure our machine is operating according to our customer expectations.”

To ensure its equipment is continuously operating, Timesavers implements heavy-duty design and construction while focusing on ease of use. Its Puma series of deburring and finishing machines perpetuates these engineering priorities in several ways.

The machines feature a centralized control panel with push-button controls, cam-adjustable contact rolls, an electronic abrasive belt tracking system, large 27-in. in-feed loading areas, an integrated coolant and filter system and centralized lubrication points for each head.

The machines are also customizable to individual company needs, available with one head to four heads with three different head types and offered in both 37-in. and 52-in. widths.

"There are many different types of media available, so we process samples for our customer to show him how we will meet his expectations, whether it be a very fine finish or a machine to grind and dimension," says Hill, adding that the machines can also handle a variety of material, including aluminum, stainless steel and titanium.

From start to finish

Since 1946, Mercury Products Corp., Schaumburg, Ill., has been supplying custom metal products and assemblies to a long list of industries, including heavy truck, motorcycle, agriculture, automotive, medical and furniture.

About a year ago, Mercury Products wanted to upgrade its polishing capabilities after acquiring work fabricating metal fuel tank straps for large-truck manufacturers that required a high-quality polished and buffed finish. At the time, the company's equipment lacked capacity and reliability, according to Keith Briggs of Mercury Products.

"We had some automated equipment, but through a lot of grief, we realized our equipment wasn't really up to par to deliver the kind of quality products that our customers were expecting," he says. "Part of it was, we had an off-brand machine that only had two-belt capability, so that meant we had to run the product through twice. We also incurred a lot of maintenance on the piece of equipment because it wasn't rugged enough for the type of products [we were making]. The demand kept going up for these type of products, and we quickly realized that [by] having a two-pass operation, we were exceeding our capability and capacity of that piece of equipment. So we set out on the journey of trying to find who was out there, who builds a good and rugged machine."

After seeing Timesavers at a trade show, Mercury Products decided to purchase a Timesavers Puma series 52-in. wet operation

with four heads, three belts and a high-quality brush. Almost immediately upon the machine's implementation, the time and labor savings were apparent.

"We've actually been awarded some other component parts, and now one of our market offerings and competitive advantages is we're a one-stop shopping house, whereas most guys out there have to send it out to an outdoor place to have their products polished and buffed," says Briggs. "We've actually integrated that into our production operation. We do these fuel tank straps that actually go off to [the] blanking press, go over to the polish and buff department, and they tape them and send them right back in to be finished out instead of having someone on the outside having to interrupt the operation, send it out and carry that inventory or bring it back in. It helps us keep our inventory levels at a more moderate level. Plus, I don't have to deal with someone on the outside. It just makes us more competitive."

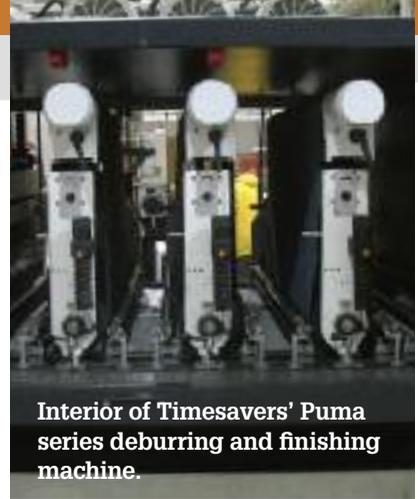
Added benefits

With its eye on the future, Mercury Products purposely bought a machine with more capacity and capability than it needed so it could keep up with the company's growth.

"We wanted capability for future products," says Briggs. "You size a machine for today, and tomorrow you [have a need for] something bigger, and you're out of luck. The piece of equipment that we ended up going with has a much wider belt carrying capability and a lot higher horsepower on the motors, so our throughput just went through the roof. Instead of having to pace the parts through, we can really load it up and go. We've been tremendously happy with the piece of equipment because it was really built rugged [and] heavy, and we can take it to about a No. 6 finish, so our automated buffing equipment doesn't have to work so hard getting it to a No. 7 or a No. 8 [finish] if the customer desires."

Another added benefit was having a high-quality brush installed with the machine. This enabled Mercury Products to eliminate burr issues and offer its customers a brush-finished look on its products.

"It was a win-win," says Briggs. "[Our customers] win because they get a better-looking product, and we win because now we're not throwing away as much product due to the surface blemishes that we were scraping material for. Both sides win because we



Interior of Timesavers' Puma series deburring and finishing machine.

removed the edge-burr condition, so nobody's getting cut at their assembly plant, and our people aren't getting injured. It turned out to be a real nice feature for us to be able to go to the market with."

Some might say a machine is only as effective as the technical support behind it, which is why Timesavers has made its service offerings a central facet of its business.

"One of the things we really strive for, and it starts from the top down, is basically support and service after the sale," says Hill. "The service will produce happy customers and repeat customers."

Accordingly, Timesavers has a toll-free number customers can call to speak to service technicians, and six field service technicians are ready and willing to visit customers if needed. What's more, Timesavers is available to answer production questions and give advice on machine operation and maintenance.

"We've sent product to them to help make [production] recommendations," says Briggs. "Since then, they've come back and made suggestions and recommendations that have really helped us out and have let us focus on running product."

For Timesavers, this approach to customer service and after-sales support underscores a high priority for the company.

"It's a relationship that goes beyond just selling machines and walking away from there," says Hill. "This is something [where] you always want to have these guys to come up and say hello and tell you their success stories." **FFJ**

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