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SHORT CYCLE TIMES, RELIABILITY AND RANGE OF MATERIAL APPLICATIONS ENABLE HARBOR STEEL TO MEET QUICK-TURN DELIVERY REQUIREMENTS

When you're going into a competitive dogfight – which is how Harbor Steel & Supply President Steve Heneveld describes the service center business these days – you want a Big Dog in your corner.

The Big Dog Heneveld brought to the competitive fight for Harbor Steel's Lexington, KY operation is a 4000-watt CINCINNATI laser cutting system, and it's proven to be a winner as the most used laser of the service center's three. This allows Harbor to capture business from a multitude of industries where ultra-fast delivery and precision make the difference between winning and losing. Able to cut mild steel up to one inch thick, the CL-840's range of capabilities, reliability and productivity have helped Harbor build new relationships with customers in mining, food processing, petrochemical, construction, power generation and marine industries. "Customers don't want to hold inventory anymore because it can lose value so quickly," says Heneveld, "so our strategy is to support them with JIT delivery to meet their business objectives. This is very much a relationship-based business, and the CINCINNATI laser has allowed us to secure business we otherwise would not have, and then deliver on what we've promised."

With operations in Lexington and three Michigan locations, Harbor Steel has traditionally served the furniture and automotive markets in Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana. The company recently established a new Pritchard, WV center primarily to serve customers in construction and mining as well. This is the company's strategic philosophy: determine where potential business exists, then establish an operation in the area, shortening delivery times and reducing shipping costs.

"Turnaround times are deal-breakers these days," says Heneveld. "We have a window in which to service our customers, and that window closes a little more each day. We used to have seven to ten days to complete a job, but now if we can't turn an order around in 24 to 48 hours customers won't wait." According to Heneveld, cutting speed was a key factor in Harbor Steel's decision to purchase the CL-840 laser cutting system, along with proximity to the southern Ohio manufacturer for prompt support.

With quick turnaround times enabled by the Cincinnati Incorporated CL-840, Harbor Steel is building new relationships with customers in the mining, food processing, petrochemical, construction, power generation and marine industries.

Harbor Steel's Mike McDermott, Regional Sales Manager, and Melissa Marcum, General Manager, Lexington plat, display one of the many decorative pieces produced with the Cincinnati Incorporated CL-840 laser.

The 4000W CL-840's power, cutting/piercing speed, range of cutting thicknesses and reduced cycle times have allowed Harbor Steel to efficiently meet a variety of customer needs, according to

Heneveld. “We have to be able to move in and out of thicknesses as fast as possible, and cut stainless, aluminum, carbon, galvanized, whatever they may need,” he adds.

Harbor Steel uses a Cincinnati Incorporated 4,000 watt CL-840 laser to cut a variety of materials including stainless and galvanized steel, aluminum and carbon.

The CL-840 features CINCINNATI’s third-generation linear motor drive which combines with greater cutting power to allow faster processing, providing 1000 ipm cutting on 20 gauge steel. The laser’s cutting head features AutoFocus lenses of 5, 7.5 and 10 inch focal length, allowing the focus points to be instantly adjusted between piercing and cutting for optimal processing of a variety of materials.

Harbor’s regional sales manager for the Lexington operation, Mike McDermott, cited the CL-840’s ability to hold tight tolerances as a major competitive advantage as well. “We have a customer that requires a – 0/+0.001 inch tolerance for holes in quarter-inch steel, and the CINCINNATI laser’s ability to do this earned us the business,” he says. Other tight- tolerance work includes notched lock boxes produced from quarter-inch plate, requiring a ±0.001 tolerance. Located in the heart of horse racing country, the laser has also brought in business from local horse farms for custom decorative signage and vanity gates. “We cut a lot of horse heads and intricate ornamental designs with the CINCINNATI laser,” McDermott adds. “The design and ventilation system on the CL-840 make it ideal for dealing with the zinc emissions associated with cutting galvanized steel, too.”

The CL-840 uses dual 5 x 10 ft. quick-change pallets to enable the offline pallet to be loaded/unloaded while work on the other pallet is being processed, allowing almost non-stop cutting efficiently. Harbor Steel also uses the Cincinnati Incorporated Programming and Nesting software for greater efficiency and material maximization.

Reliability of the CL-840 is crucial for Harbor Steel. “Machine downtime is death because it creates a backlog which costs us business,” Heneveld emphasizes. The CINCINNATI laser is engineered for aggressive use under adverse conditions in service centers, built with heavy weight 0.75 to 1.5-inch plate construction, double the frame weight of other lasers. This battleship base provides exceptional rigidity against dynamic forces of the moving axes, and long service life under adverse, heavy-use conditions.

Heneveld says the proximity of Cincinnati Incorporated to the Lexington service center has been a plus, too. The Lexington center runs two shifts per day, and the CL-840 is the facility’s most-used laser cutting system, operating “almost constantly,” according to him. “The support we’ve received from CINCINNATI has been fantastic,” he says. “We can’t wait for parts to come in from another country. Waiting days for a machine to be repaired can cost us not only jobs, but customers. Anytime we need training or a part, CINCINNATI reps are quick to respond.”