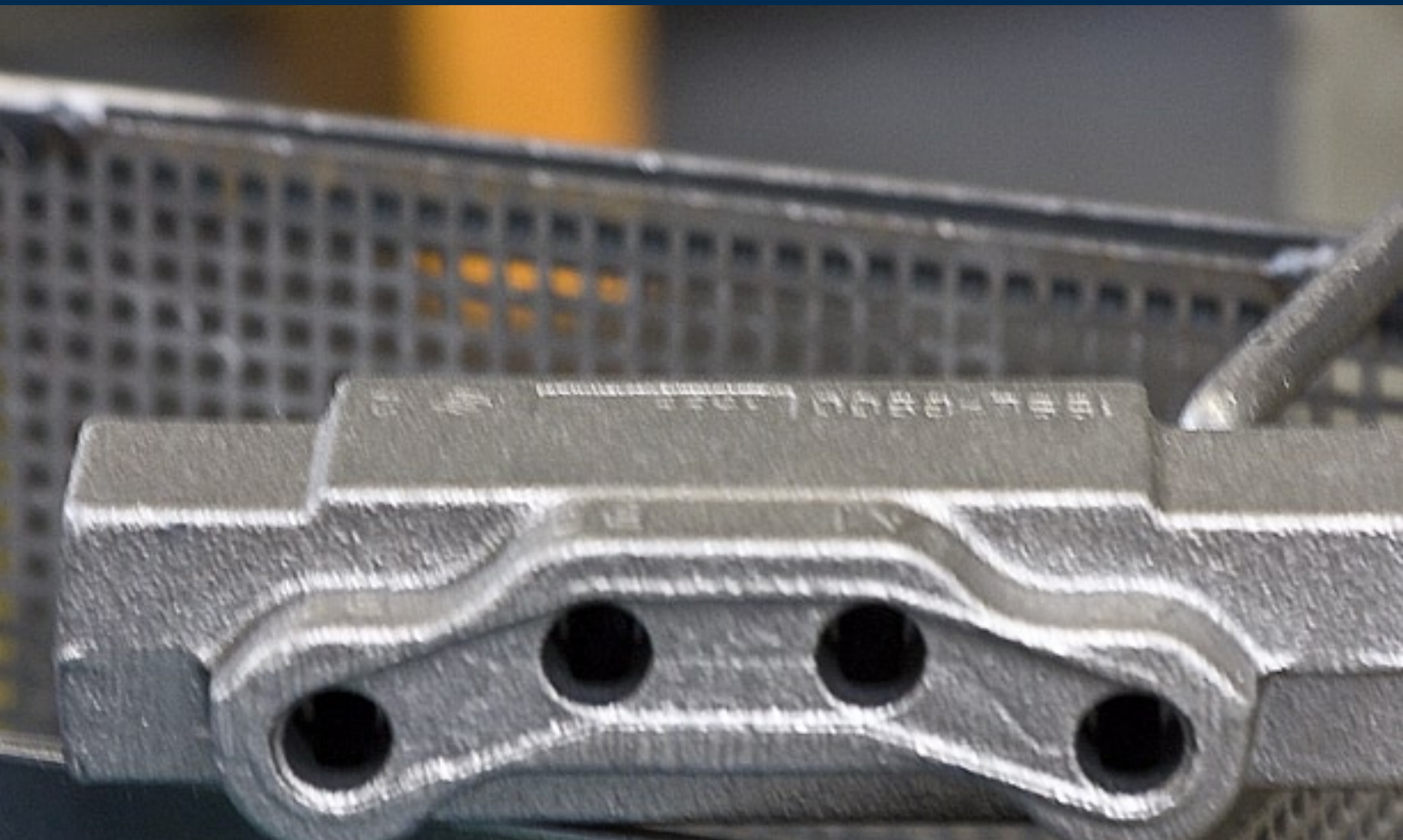


New tools took Wema to higher ground

Wema NV





Unimerco has given the Belgian company Wema a boost towards higher quality and faster production. This has enabled Wema to win projects for e.g. global fluid power companies such as Sauer Danfoss.

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Belgian fluid power subsupplier Wema has had success with advanced tools from Unimerco

Many subsuppliers are able to machine standard hydraulic valves for the fluid power industry. The field is full of competitors, all aiming for the same goal: to produce with a low price and perfect quality as the most important factor. Belgian company Wema wanted to go elsewhere in order to find ground where the company's skills for manufacturing high quality hydraulic valves could be exploited. At the same time, this would leave most of the competitors far behind.

"We knew that we had competences in producing valves of a very high quality," technical director Paul Van Roosebeke explains. However, in some cases it was difficult to find the perfect tooling needed to match price and quality of the product.

The right tools

"Coincidentally, we met Unimerco at the right time at the Hannover fair. We were simply looking for a better tooling solution in order to make a quality step up," Process engineer Koen Delodder

says. He was enthusiastic when he saw some of the cutting tool solutions, which Unimerco had already developed for other worldwide hydraulic manufacturers. "Unimerco's Grooving Land Tool seemed to meet some of our needs for achieving extreme narrow tolerances," Koen says.

Traditionally, the machining of grooving lands in hydraulic valve bodies is a very time-consuming operation. The patented Grooving Land Tool is a profile cutter which is used for machining all grooving lands in one operation. In some cases, half of the grooving lands are machined from one side and the rest from the other side of the spool bore.

The tool often replaces a cutter with inserts, which can only machine one grooving land at a time. Usually, each spool bore has 7-15 grooving lands, and this means that the Grooving Land Tool reduces machining time considerably.

From test to production

The tool replaced five tools, which were previously used in the process. "We tested it for three weeks, and as it was working very well, we decided to use it," Koen Delodder says. He was very satisfied that the tool could almost immediately run in the production.

Wema started up with the new tools in the company's most modern machinery, but has also taken the tools to older machines to see, if they could benefit from the tools too, and still keep the very tight tolerances needed to meet the customers' demands.

On an on

Previously, the operators at the machines had to check the tolerances on the critical dimensions often and needed to adjust tooling regularly.

Now with the new Unimerco tooling the process is very stable. Unimerco has stated that the tools



Director Paul van Roosebeke finds that partnership with both customers and tool suppliers such as Unimerco is both challenging and highly profitable for all parties.

in normal circumstances are able to run 10,000 parts. Today, the operators also involved in this project, are very satisfied with the results obtained so far. Their experience linked with the Unimerco tools is giving a very good result overall.

Better and broader

The new tools from Unimerco have given Wema better possibilities to reach its strategic goals of attracting new customers for e.g. machining complex blocks and hydraulic valve bodies and

assemblies. This customer segment is characterized by a need of more complex solutions, which requires a high degree of co-operation between subsupplier and customer. Paul van Roosebeke calls it partnership. He believes that this is one way of meeting the future challenges, and he also seeks closer partnership with his own sub-suppliers – including Unimerco.

“We should not be afraid of sharing knowledge,” he says. He admits that it takes a different mindset to share confidential information with

customers and sub-suppliers, but having seen the positive impact that Unimerco’s tools have had on Wema’s production, he is certain that it is the right way to go. The company’s strategy of seeking new ground has also shown its impact on the combination of customers. Within less than two years, the export has increased up to 90 per cent, and Wema now supplies its products to customers in Europe, USA, Brazil, Japan and China.

Two years ago, the company established production in Romania. This is part of the strategy of becoming a sub-supplier of both standard hydraulic valve solutions and to companies with extreme quality standards. Wema is planning to invest in new two-spindle machines, which will enable the company to machine even more complex parts of high quality in higher volume, while ensuring faster delivery to their customers.

To a large extent, the new machinery will also run with the advanced tools from Unimerco. “We see the success with the tools, we have taken on, so we plan to integrate more of their tools in our production,” Koen Delodder says. ■

Facts: Wema was established in 1959 as a machine builder company. In 2001, it moved to the 14,000 square meter facilities in Zedelgem. Here 110 CNC-machines for turning, grinding, honing and machining centers are producing a broad variety of industrial components for e.g. the fluid power industry. In a lot of cases, Wema also assembles, tests (and paints) hydraulic cartridge valves, complete hydraulic valves or other function tested assemblies.

The company has chosen to machine components up to max. 500 X 500 mm in medium to large quantities. Wema NV aims to be an international authority as a subcontracting company, which specialises in the production and assembly of standard and complex high quality metal components.

Wema counts costumers among main OEM’s of machines and equipment for a variety of industries, such as the earth-moving, agriculture, hydraulics, off-road and automotive industries, and has already made steps towards becoming one of the leading subcontractors in series production of high precision mechanical and hydraulic components such as: stems, spools, valve groups, cartridges, blocks, manifolds and tested hydraulic assemblies and valves.



Process engineer Koen Delodder and Unimerco’s key account manager Werner Bendel, discuss solutions for new projects.



UNIMERCO Inc.

Unimerco Inc. manufactures, distributes and services tools for machining, primarily for the metal, automotive, aerospace, fluid power and woodworking industries. The tooling concept comprises standard and customized tools, RE•NEW™ tool maintenance, coating and optimization guidance. The American company was established in 1995. Today, the company has product development, production, sales and administration in Saline, Michigan, as well as a sales office in Charlotte, North Carolina. The company is part of Unimerco Group with companies in Europe, the Americas and Asia. Since 2003, Unimerco has been consistently chosen as one of the 100 best European workplaces by the 'Great Place to Work Institute'.

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