

From close to far away:

Timesavers provide exemplary

Timesavers have been featured several times in *Stainless Steel World* magazine and its associated sister publications. It is not surprising since they are one of the largest and technologically most advanced manufacturers of wide-belt-grinding machine solutions. They service the metal, special materials and plastic processing industries in the belt-width range 200–2600 millimetres. Worldwide they have more than 55,000 machines in use, delivering finishes in very diverse application fields. “At the basis of our philosophy,” says Piet Kooman, Timesavers’ Marketing and Sales Director, “is our unprecedented approach to assist our customers by providing them not only with excellent machinery but also with exemplary services and support that ensue from our innovative technologies and unquestionable expertise.” *Stainless Steel World* took time out to talk with him about Timesavers’ unique approach to customer relations and how this works. As a true test of the pudding we also checked with some of their customers to find out what it is like doing business with them.

By John Butterfield

Timesavers have been making a major impact on the grinding industry since 1939 when their founder Arie van der Linden began a repair shop for wood-working machinery in The Netherlands. Since these early beginnings they have developed into a company specializing in the production of a broad selection of wet and dry machines for grinding, calibrating, finishing and deburring carbon steel, stainless steel and aluminium, as well as for more exotic materials such as for the world’s largest producers of molybdenum, zirconium and titanium. They also make machinery to handle even tungsten, tantalum and copper. In some cases the work of the

Today, Vogel-Bauer is a middle-sized family enterprise in third generation hands. Their core competence is the customised manufacture of semi-finished products in corrosion-, acid- and heat-resistant steel grades. Among other tasks they create any required metal surface by grinding and brushing the strips. They also provide a wide-range of strip profiles by either metal-removing processes or by cold shaping, and they repair defective strips surfaces by grinding. Putting special edges on flat stainless products for aesthetic, safety and functional reasons is further a part of their offered services. When Vogel-Bauer started out their market was a small niche and they produced very narrow coils. They began with cutting and slitting to length and



Another close up of machinery installed at Vogel-Bauer Edelstahl.

machinery involves removing as little as a few microns from the surface of the material with great accuracy. In other cases, it may mean taking away several millimetres from a plate all at once. Today, they have three facilities operating out of Goes in The Netherlands and they also get support from partners all over the world.

“Whatever the task,” says Piet Kooman “we at Timesavers recognise that we owe our business not only to providing excellent machinery solutions but just as much to the long-term trust we create among our clients in our ability to provide them with cost-effective prices, sound advice and reliable machinery made possible by our huge experience and knowledge of grinding processes.”

Working with Vogel-Bauer Edelstahl

A good example of how long-term client relationships develop with Timesavers can be given by Gerald Vogel, Technical Manager of Vogel-Bauer Edelstahl from Solingen in Germany. The company has been in operation since the 1930s and their relationship with Timesavers goes back to the 1980’s.

then decided to add more added-value to the work by giving the strips a good finish so they moved into grinding and then polishing. As their relationship developed with Timesavers so their Timesavers’ equipment expanded. Today, they have three lines in operation using machinery from Timesavers, which includes a 62 series model 900 grinding belt RT C. Mr. Vogel: “The machines are joined into slitting lines and deal with gauges between 0.2 to 3.0 mm. What is special about their 62 series model is that it enables them, through grinding and brushing coil-to-coil, to produce all the types of dry process surfaces that may be needed whether these are rough ground or finely brushed. We particularly enjoy the versatility of the machines,” says Mr. Vogel. “We even incorporated the possibility of producing a hairline finish into the machine at the special recommendation of Timesavers. It enables us to produce a finish less often seen in Europe but which is becoming particularly popular in street furniture, and is already widely used in Asia. We knew it might open up a new market segment for us in Europe but even more surprising was that our first orders came from the South Korean telecommunications market. Another prac-



Timesavers machinery installed at Cemilas B.V. in Sint Maartensdijk, The Netherlands.

tality offered was that you can replace a grinding belt with a brushing belt in under 60 seconds per unit. You can even repair defects to surfaces by double grinding the strip material so you can say that we are very pleased with our association with Timesavers and the advice they have given us.”

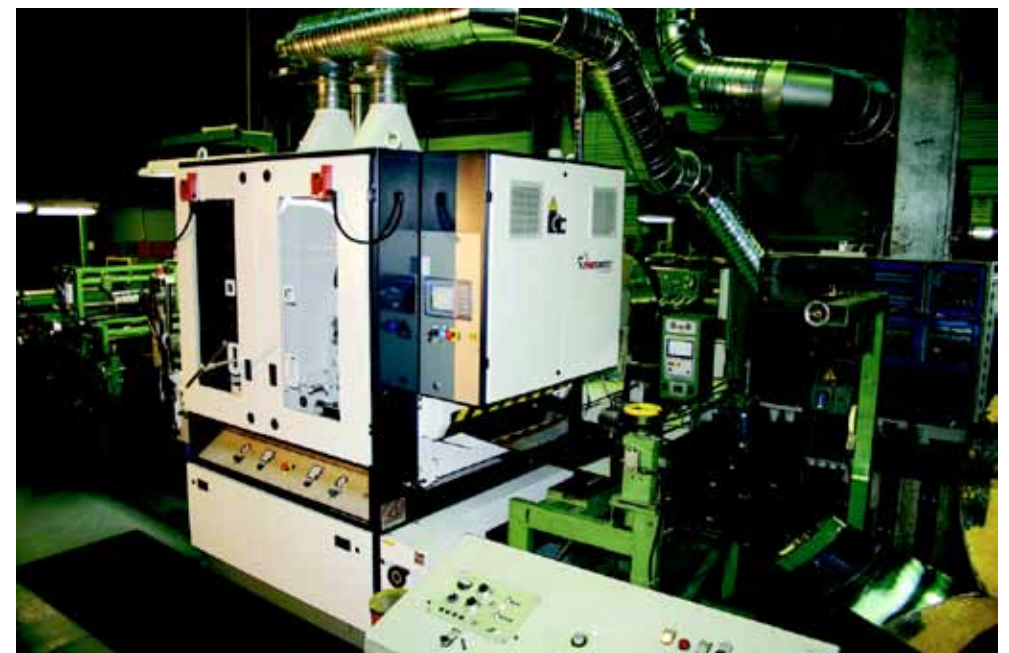
Trust and long-term relationships

Kees Kuijlen of Cemilas BV is likewise very satisfied with his relationship with Timesavers. The firm is a high-tech company, specialized in welding techniques and metal working and hails from Sint Maartensdijk in The Netherlands. Focusing on the middle and higher segment of the market, it has become a big business over the past twenty-five years with two locations and a working area of 3500 sqm. They purchased a grinder from Timesavers for handling steel plates with a dimension of up to 30 sqm. “What makes the relationship good” says Mr. Kuijlen “is that we have known each other for a long time – around fifteen years. We began by making components for their machines, and working

closely together we gained a good and very professional impression of them, particularly as a solution provider. In this way they have also helped us out and we have not been disappointed. Besides the grinding machine, we have also developed a roller table together to feed the plates in the machine and a turntable which rotates the plates upside down so it is possible to grind the plates on both sides in one cycle.”

Listening to customers

It is not for nothing that Timesavers has managed to build up so many customers and sell so many machines, for they listen carefully to their clients’ needs and have developed a whole series of ancillary equipment accordingly for their grinding and sanding equipment. Examples includes dress units for repairing/dressing the brushes and contact rollers in the machine, computer controlled equipment, washing and drying machines, oil spray units, rapid abrasive belt exchange systems, speedy brush exchange systems and water filtration units for wet machines. “All of these products have been designed to



Mr. Vogel of Vogel-Bauer Edelstahl in Solingen, Germany, says that “getting good value for money was an important consideration when deciding to work with Timesavers.”

service around the world



Training

Another customer of Timesavers is BTH Import Stal (Steel). The company has been playing an important part in the Polish steel market for the last fifteen years where they are one of the largest stockholders and importers of stainless steel products such as sheets, tubes and bars. They deliver these in a great many sizes and grades for a variety of industries ranging from chemicals to food-stuffs. They also are a service centre for grinding and polishing and also carry out laser cutting and sheet bending.

From Timesavers the company has recently bought two wet grinding machines, a 71 series 1600 grinding belt RT and a 71 series 1600 brushes. With these machines they can offer customers a Scotch-brite and No. 4 material finish directly. However, they also finish the customer's own material as well. The series 71 wet and 72 dry from Timesavers also offer a whole range of further finishes that encompass: wet or dry hairline finishes, brush/micron finishes with Scotch-brite brushes and belts, duplo finishes which are a combination finish produced with first belts and then Scotch-brite brushes, as well as No. 3 and 4 finishes with abrasive belts (dry) and waterproof abrasive belts (wet). Moreover, the flexibility and unique design of the roller table incorporating a contra-roller allows thinner sheets to be finished without difficulties arising. For cold rolled sheets this means thicknesses of 0.46–4 mm and sizes in the range 1250 x 2500, 1.500 x 3000, and 1500 x 4000/5000 mm. It is, additionally, possible to finish hot rolled sheets which are supplied with a working width of up to 2600 mm.

"To know all the ins and outs of the machines can be quite complicated," says Mr. Kotarba of

save the client time so that we have gradually established one of the widest product ranges available of any company competing in this market, and everything is supplied in absolute tip-top quality," says Piet Kooman. Listening to customers also means not only providing 'tailor-made' machines but also taking time to sit down with the customer to discuss projects in detail to ensure that everything is understood and is got right com-



"When Timesavers installed equipment at Niagara Specialty Metals in Akron, NY, USA," says Mr. Shabala "they were very responsive to our needs."

pletely from the start. "It is never just a question of selling a customer a machine," continues Mr. Kooman, "but rather selling a whole process package exactly made to meet their needs and specifications even if the basis is a standard machine. Only when agreement has been reached do we go off to the drawing board to develop the machine. Moreover, we are not afraid to say 'no' to a customer if we think his ideas are wrong. Such things need to be said when you are in business for long-term relationships and we are never interested in just making a quick sale and moving on. Moreover, all equipment is rigorously tested on our premises before being shipped out to customers so that we know that it will perform to expectations."

BTH Import Stal, "so Timesavers brought some of our staff over to their headquarters in The Netherlands before the machines were set up, to train them about the intricacies and later, once the machines were installed in Poland, Timesavers sent some of their own staff over to us to show our people exactly how to work, look after, and repair the machines. Downtime in factories can be very costly so should a problem occur, no matter how irregularly, it is crucial that the machine is up and running again very quickly. We are therefore pleased at how seriously Timesavers take their after services". "Furthermore," adds Piet Kooman "if a problem ever occurs and it cannot be solved over the phone then we send or expert service engineers out to clients sharpish no matter where they are in the world."



"Equipment can be complicated, so Timesavers' ensured that our staff were well able to handle the job," says Mr Kotarba of BTH Import Stal in Poland.

Value for money

When making a choice of supplier, Mr. Vogel indicated that "getting good value for money was an important consideration to be taken into account and certainly Timesavers achieve this." Such a remark, however, does not come as a great surprise since Timesavers' machinery is made to last. Dry machines can have a life expectancy of anything up to thirty years and even under harsher conditions, a lifetime of fifteen years is not at all uncommon for their wet machines, which is a long time in operation for an abrasive machine.

Good performing machines – personnel going the extra mile

An example of this comes from Timesavers' relationship with Niagara Specialty Metals who hail from Akron, NY, USA. The company was founded in 1982 and today is a manufacturer of tool steels, high speed steels, martensitic stainless steels, powered metals, and controlled expansion alloys including aerospace grades. "Over the years," says Bob Shabala "we have developed into more than just a rolling mill and have added specialized equipment to process sheet and plate after it is rolled to gauge. We also flatten titanium, molybdenum, and other brittle alloys with some of the finest roller levellers on the market and we have extensive cutting and machining capabilities".

When asked how they came into contact with Timesavers Mr. Shabala replies: We had

an old 37" Timesavers machine that we had taken over from elsewhere but which eventually needed upgrading, so we first met Piet Kooman to discuss issues in 2009. Through consultation we decided to upgrade to one of their 63" 7100 machines that is used for finishing stainless steel sheet, and titanium tool steel sheets and plates. Generally, we use a standard finish with it, which is probably 63 RA but we can go down to 16 RA if needed. Why we decided to go with Timesavers as opposed to looking at a competitor's products? – simply a customer of our's had a couple of their machines in operation and were pleased with their performance. It turned out to be a good decision on our part as well. Timesavers further tailor-made the machine so that we would be also able to grind heavy plates. Overall, I have found them very responsive, for example, their technicians will drop in just to see us when they happen to be in the neighbourhood on some other chore, and Piet made time to help work out some of the initial glitches on the project. Certainly, we would work with them again."

And closing Piet Kooman has this to say: "it's not every company that has the confidence to give over the story telling to their customers but at the end of the day we know that it's their opinion of us and not our opinion of ourselves that truly matters. By caring to their needs and showing the flexibility and willingness to go the extra mile, we are certain that we will guarantee our own successful path into the future."



BTH Import Stal have been a major player in Polish steel markets for the last fifteen years.