

United Performance Metals

United Performance Metals is a company that prides itself on the depth of their inventory, the expanse of their processing capabilities, and the quality of their team. In operation for over 30 years, the specialty metals service center caters to a myriad of different industries including aerospace, alternative energy and automotive. "While it might not be hard to find service centers that carry a greater breadth of products than we do, it is very difficult to find one that has the depth of products that we do in high performance grades including stainless, nickel and cobalt alloys," says Vice President of Marketing and Business Development, Scott Fasse. "We have worked hard to understand the requirements of our customers and the markets they serve and have positioned our inventory to support them."

By Ashleigh Ryan

More Than Just High Performance Metals

What sets United Performance apart from the rest? Fasse points to their team of seasoned experts as the key differentiator: "Our talented and tenured staff not only understands the metal we sell, but also the operations that metal undergoes to be transformed into a finished product. It is not uncommon for our employees to draw upon their experience to help a customer select the right metal, evaluate production methods or streamline processes to ensure the best overall experience." As a result of their expertise, the company works with a significant amount of tube manufacturers who value their knowledge when it comes to determining what edge works best for welded tubes.

But the company doesn't just provide high performance metals; they also perform a variety of services for their metals, including edging, leveling and laser cutting. "Our ability to either slit or level master coils has provided greater latitude in the range of specialty grades and gauges we carry. Aggregating sheet and coil demand justifies master coil purchases of niche grades and gauges." As a result of their available services, customers are able to order their material to a decimal thickness. Fasse explains: "A lot of service centers stock their products to gauge; we actually stock our

metal to specific decimal thicknesses. This makes our metal more attractive when tight tolerances are required."

Aware of the importance of timely delivery, United Performance strives to ensure that customers receive their orders quickly. The company works hard to leverage everything in their control to meet the customer's requirements when it comes to delivery. "While this begins with inventory it extends to timely processing and even the ability to position metal close to the customer's point of use. In addition to ordering ample supply for our general inventory, in many cases we work closely enough with our customers to establish dedicated inventories and safety stocks," says Fasse. With inventory consistently in stock for the materials they carry and in house processing at the ready, United Performance is able to react quickly to a customer's need.

Their mission to ensure that customers receive products quickly, but also in the right form, is the primary reason the company has continued to invest in state-of-the-art processing equipment. When it comes to positioning metal close to its point of use, United Performance has free range of its own facilities as well as those of their sister companies at their disposal. As a part of the O'Neal Steel family, the company has the unique ability to work in



partnership with their affiliate companies to offer a wide spectrum of products and services to customers around the world.

Expanding to Serve New Technologies & Markets

UPM's growth has largely been directed by the requirements of their customers and the markets they serve, resulting in new products, geographies and service offerings. One of the catalysts for their expansion and investments has been the growing number of uses for the metals they stock. "Some of the areas in which we see our metal being used didn't even exist a few short years ago. The emergence of the fuel cell and solar power are just two examples of new technologies that are driving growth. Some traditional markets that have not typically used stainless are also migrating towards higher performance materials. A good example of this is the

auto industry where the need to do things more efficiently and cleaner are leading to the use of lighter, stronger materials," says Fasse. In addition, miniaturization of items like electronics is also creating new opportunities for their metals.

The company has expanded their domestic footprint over the past several years with both facilities and new sales territories. Fasse points to the domestic expansion of their facility in California as a highlight. What started out as 13,000sq/ft of office and warehouse space in 2008 has swiftly grown to a 65,000sq/ft facility with dedicated sales and operations staff, inventory and in-house processing. "An existing customer base in California coupled with the fact that the primary industries we serve are well represented provided a good justification for the decision." As part of their recent expansion in California, the company invested in a



United Performance Metals: In a League of Their Own

new shear, allowing them the ability to deliver small cut pieces to tight tolerances at both their Hamilton, Ohio headquarters and their California facility.

Another major area of investment over the past few years has been in coil processing. By investing in coil processing equipment, the company has increased the volume of coil they are capable of processing, the range of thicknesses they can process, and the quality of the product they can deliver. The recent addition of two new slitters, 18", at their Hamilton, Ohio headquarters has also increased capacity greatly. Likewise, the addition of two slitters in California, 12" and 24", extends their slitting capabilities to the west coast. "Light gauge slitting allows us to go down to basically about .005 in thickness, which is very thin. One of the things that we've seen is a demand for lighter and lighter metal be it for electronics or tubing, people are trying to make products lighter and more efficient." United Performance has also invested in edging and oscillate winding equipment to ensure that customers receive their coil in the best format for their application.

Last year, the company completed the purchase of San Francisco based Plus Ten Stainless, a company specializing in stainless and aluminum plate. Although largely focused on the semi-conductor market, this acquisition begins to extend the company's capabilities further into the plate market. As a result of their location, Plus Ten Stainless boasts several customers in the Silicon Valley; their big focuses are on companies that produce computer chips and actually make the machines to construct the computer chips.

In an effort to extend their sheet processing capabilities, United Performance installed a state-of-the-art cut-to-length line. In addition to increasing efficiency, the new machine does an excellent job at delivering sheet that is flat—an important consideration with the increased prevalence of lasers and precision fabrication equipment in the market. A sheet that is not within flatness tolerance can easily crash a machine. "We



also recently added a Mazak Laser to help our customers achieve additional cost savings. Delivering material that is cut to starting dimensions allows the customer to begin adding value to the metal as soon as it hits their door," explains Fasse.

Internationally, United Performance has also been fortunate with their growth. The company credits the globalization of supply chains as a major contributor towards their international growth. They often collaborate with OEMs to establish a presence in a given geography that is close enough to support their needs; at other times an industry joins a foothold in a particular region which will spur the company's growth into that area. Their

position as a member of the O'Neal family of companies often allows them leverage to achieve entry into international markets more quickly. Fasse elaborates: "A few years ago we established a joint venture with a few of our O'Neal sister companies in China. An evolving aerospace concern in the region coupled with an existing base of customers in the Pacific Rim paved the way for the expansion. We have also invested in sales offices and stocking locations in other key geographies like Europe and India."

United Performance Metals truly is a customer-focused organization committed to delivering the metals you need and the solutions you want. Positioning itself as a world leader in specialty stainless, nickel and high temperature alloys with domestic and international facilities located in the key geographies required to service their customers and primary markets, United Performance Metals works hard to place the demands of their valued customers first.



Facts & Figures

Name:	United Performance Metals
Founded:	1982
Offices:	Hamilton, Ohio; La Mirada, California; Benicia, California; Singapore
Products:	Sheet, Coil
Materials:	Stainless, High Temp Alloys, Cobalt
Services:	Slitting, Edging, Leveling, Shearing, Cutting, Laser
Website:	www.upmet.com