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Dealer Profile

John Manley, Machine Tool Systems Inc.

When John Manley, president of Machine Tool Systems Inc. (MTS), Toronto, ON, started his company it didn't take him long to realize what the focus should be.

"When you start a business, you learn a lot during the first five years. One thing that I learned is that you can't be everything to everyone even with a specialty such as grinding.

"I refined the business so that I ended up working on high precision, high complexity and high production applications. For example, if someone just wants a basic, hydraulic surface grinder, there are 30 different models out there. We are focused more on CNC technology," Manley says.

Manley, who is a graduate of the University of Toronto with a degree in mechanical engineering, has been in the machine tool business since 1986.

Initially, Manley worked with several machine tool distributors in the capacity of regional sales manager.

In 1992, Manley accepted a position with Walter Grinders Inc. of Virginia, one of the firms that was being represented by the firm that Manley worked with at the time. Manley worked with Walter Grinders, based out of Ann Arbor, MI, for the next six years as a senior account manager with a regional sales territory comprising Michigan and Canada.

In 1998, Manley left Walter Grinders to launch Machine Tool Systems. "I had spoken to Walter Grinders about moving back to Canada and taking on the line," he says. The Walter line became one of Machine Tool Systems' founding lines of grinding equipment that it began distributing.

Subsequently, Manley was attending a trade show when he bumped into an acquaintance who had heard that Manley was launching a grinding-specific distributorship.

"It is a very small industry especially on

the manufacturer's level in the United States. Grinding is such a specialized market and I had established many relationships because of my background in grinding.

"At the time, I realized that that was an interesting marketing opportunity to just focus on the grinding niche," he says.

Shortly after that meeting, Manley was approached by United Grinding Technologies which represents the Schleifring grinding equipment group of companies comprising Blohm, Jung, Magerle, Schaudt, Mikrosa, BWF and Studer. As a result, MTS also began distributing the United Grinding line of equipment.

Over time, MTS began distributing other grinding related lines of products including filtration systems, grinding wheels, wheel dressing systems and more. The complementary product lines that MTS picked up were intended to enable MTS to act as a one-stop or turnkey specialist in grinding technology.

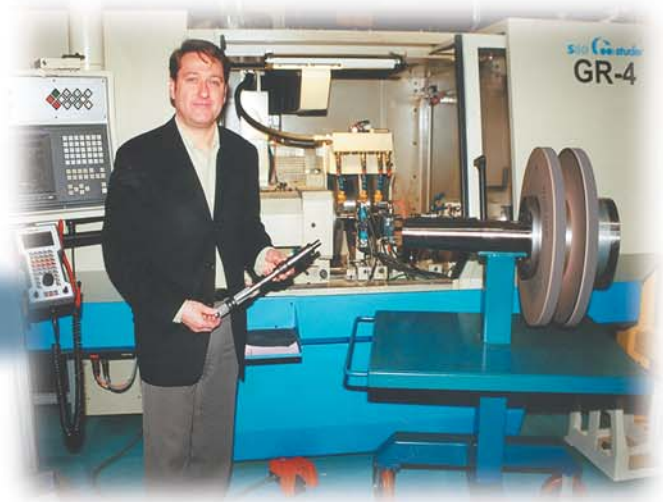
Today, MTS distributes a wide variety of grinding equipment including lines from Profiltec, PeTeWe, Doebeli (optical profile grinders); Barnes (vertical and horizontal honing systems, filtration systems); and more.

At present, MTS has three employees based out of an office in downtown Toronto.

"Grinding is a bit of a black art. It's not as simple as purchasing a cutting machine right out of the box, turn it on, take a regularly skilled operator (and start making parts). Instead, grinding is very process driven.

"Typically, the end user knows what end result he wants such as making a specific mold component or a specific high production, automotive part.

"In the case of a CNC tool grinder, it could be a focus on the S-point drill market.



John Manley, president of Machine Tool Systems, says the firm's ability to handle turnkey solutions is critical.

However, to get to that end result can be a lot more work than some people anticipate," he explains.

Continues Manley, "When you buy your first CNC machine, you quickly realize that the grinding process is now being controlled by the machine and not the operator.

"While the operator can still influence the process, it is the machine that really takes over. At that point, you are relying on the dexterity of the control including how user-friendly it is and how much versatility the control offers."

As a result, training requirements can often be underestimated, both by the customer and the machine distributor, he adds.

"To learn how to use all of the features (offered by a CNC grinding machine), you need fairly intensive training and that is what most people underestimate.

"You have to have a realistic expectation of what will be involved in the training and realize that it is a process.

"For instance, you have grinding wheels, coolant, filtration systems, a dressing solution and more. How all of these complement one another is critical as a turnkey system," he states.

The ability of MTS as far as providing a turnkey solution is critical, particularly when it comes to grinding, says Manley.

"You always hear distributors saying that they can provide a turnkey milling solution or turnkey drilling solution.

"In reality, a week after the machine arrives, the customer starts optimizing the machine and has six or seven different suppliers that can offer him six or seven different solutions.

"However, with grinding you don't see that so much. In grinding, you need a supplier to come in with the turnkey package. Now, there will still be optimization. However, even if the customer wants to try a different grit of wheel, he will still likely stay with the same wheel manufacturer that we originally suggested," says Manley.

"We focus on high precision, high complexity, high production applications."