



Works Director Charlie Sampy inspects a component machined on NTG's Integrex 300-IV ST

North East Contractor NTG Precision Engineers is proving that getting into 5-axis machining does not mean you have to go out and find a completely new customer base.

Based in the Team Valley, Gateshead, and with over 30 years of experience in subcontracting, the company was formerly known As Newcastle Tool & Gauge. It re-branded as NTG when it moved to new premises in 2010.

Managing Director, Brian Bates has been with the company since the mid-1980's and has seen customers and markets come and go, but the 1990's decline in UK toolmaking was a significant movement.

"In the 1990's, we realised that toolmaking in this country was in decline and that our markets were disappearing to Taiwan and China" he says. "It was obvious we needed to change and we began to focus on spare parts and precision components for companies like Black & Decker".

However the company could not quite leave it's toolmaking past behind. "A number of our old customers found that cut price tooling in the Far East really meant compromising on quality. We had more people coming to us with tools made from an incorrect hardened material, or tools without any dowelling, and asking us to put it right"

The future though lay with new markets that required precision engineering components, such as power generation, oil and gas and medical. Around 2005/6 the company moved into these new sectors with considerable success, but didn't rest on its laurels.

"We knew that our customers were experiencing cost pressures and that if we were to stay competitive, we would need to be quicker and cheaper" says Charlie Sampy, Works Director. "That was when we started talking to Mazak about 5-axis machining to replace traditional turning and milling operations."

Mazak's solution was to recommend the Integrex 300-IV, ST, a twin-spindle multi tasking machine capable of full simultaneous 5-axis turning and milling.

"We knew before we bought the machine that we had customers we could migrate to the new technology and produce their parts quicker and cheaper," says Sampy. "We didn't leap in by looking for new components but used the machine for many of our existing customers' components that were both turned and milled. With the Integrex we can perform both operations on the same machine, with the same operator and with the same programme, which gives very significant process improvements."

The success of the initial move into true 5-axis machining encouraged NTG to invest in a second Mazak multi-tasking machine, the vertical travelling column VTC 800-20 SR, a large capacity high performance 5-axis simultaneous machining centre.

Mr Sampy believes that the investment in technology has enabled NTG to remain highly competitive.” The key for us has been to tool up with new technology, but then use the savings generated by the technology to hold our prices. In effect, we’ve used technology to absorb and deliver cost down initiatives whilst enhancing our profitability going forward. At a time when inflation is driving up transport costs, materials and wages this is a significant selling point for us”.

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