



29th May 2020 – LEITZ APPROVED

Charles Yorke explains the true value of making your tooling supplier your partner

Correct tooling properly managed and serviced can often be the key to greater efficiency, productivity, streamlining of manufacturing, and profitability. However, all too often tooling is simply taken for granted, and purchased on price, with little consideration for the whole life cost.

Market leader in luxury British bespoke furniture Charles Yorke shares their tooling experience, expert advice, and solutions they have developed with tooling supplier partner Leitz Tooling.

Operating from a modern 5,000 sq m facility, Charles Yorke has a range of high-tech woodworking equipment. They combine the use of state-of-the-art technology with traditional cabinet-making techniques and quality materials to create individually designed and handcrafted furniture. The Kirkby-based business has been producing bespoke kitchens, bathrooms, occasional rooms, and furniture since 1999, and over the last 20 years has enjoyed sustained growth internationally.

“Machine tooling is so important to get right. Low purchase prices or bargain service-only contracts might seem like a good idea, but unless you’re paying attention businesses can end up paying thousands of pounds more than they expected. They can get through far too much tooling when it’s not fit for purpose, unnecessarily wasting a lot of valuable material and spend a fortune in down-time,” said Charles Yorke production manager Aaron Benford. “Around three years ago, before we started working with Leitz, we had tooling problems every week. The supplier had very limited knowledge, and response times were delayed and often misinforming or outright incorrect.

“We were spending a substantial amount each year on tooling and having daily tooling headaches. Since we switched to Leitz for everything, our annual tooling bill is 40% less and, most importantly,

we have no more tooling headaches at all. We happily pay more for tools because we don't need to buy as often. They last much longer, and we have had a massive reduction in waste. The operators get the work done the first time every time, which is essential. The shared knowledge at Leitz is brilliant. They have access to relevant experience in every process and will get the right solution back to us fast."

The biggest saving Charles Yorke has seen is in slashing the dead cost of downtime. Aaron continued, "All our tooling is now 'quick release' - straight off, straight on - sorted. The bespoke nature of our work means that our machines aren't churning out great volumes of the same product. This means that the tool management provided by Leitz is essential to ensure that the tools are serviced at the right time. Ensuring that our high-quality materials are never compromised and that we're not wasting time. Servicing more frequently means that you take less off the tool, maintaining the cut quality, and get even more sharpens out of that tool. And that is a lot more efficient than running the tool down until we start wasting valuable product."

Brian Maddox, national sales manager for Leitz Tooling said, "Tool management is vital, and part of that service is dedicated to helping companies like Charles Yorke plan their production. The team at Charles Yorke also appreciates the need for operator knowledge. The training that we offer customer operators means that when they understand the tooling, they understand the impact on the processes much better. We hold ourselves accountable to our customers and provide as much support as is needed. It is so important for companies to know exactly what their manufacturing is costing them per product. Being a manufacturing partner, we bring our expertise to the entire production line of every scale, and our customers get the benefit."

Charles Yorke has also invested in Leitz Tooling's VariplanProfix system. The unique features of Leitz VariplanProfix include constant profile and diameter after resharpening as the profile knife thickness decreases. The clamping face stop maintains the knife's precise radial position, and the patented knife seating guides the resharpened knife precisely into the same position in the tool body. Aaron said, "Leitz's VariplanProfix system is saving us approximately £30,000 a year in labor, hours, and downtime for an investment of less than a third of that saving. What we were doing with three separate operations, we are now doing in one pass.

"We've not had a tooling 'emergency' since working with Leitz. When we have a new requirement, we talk to Leitz early to make sure we're planning things in the most efficient way. Hard

conversations between manufacturing and tooling suppliers need to be had. With Leitz, those conversations are open and easy.”

Leitz is focused on increased productivity, reduced downtime, noise, scrap, and improved quality and safety in tested tooling design. All tooling from Leitz is manufactured and safety tested to BS EN847 standards helping to ensure the welfare of customer employees.

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