

Speedy VMC Boosts Shop Business

Gerry Faber is busy. Many of his competitors are not.

Faber's shop, Faber Machine Inc. (Honey Brook, PA), is using faster production to attract business despite the lean economy. Since installing a Fanuc RoboDrill CNC mill/drill/tap center in March, the company has beat every delivery date for orders of medical equipment components, specialty fasteners, and other machined parts.

Although speed is the main factor, it isn't everything. The six-man shop also has a reputation for consistently machining to tolerances as tight as 0.0003" (0.008 mm). Faber coordinates his equipment, reins in labor costs, and keeps overhead low. Consequently, he is able to charge relatively low shop rates.

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shop's competitors are not.**

"The biggest runs still go to China," Faber explains, "but we do all right. We've turned out as many as 20,000 parts for a single job, but most of our runs are only 1000-2000 pieces. No job is too small—I'll set up for 50 pieces if I have to."

About half of the shop's work is machining aluminum. The rest involves brass, stainless steel, and carbon steel. Most of the finished parts are 2" (51 mm) or less diam.

Faber purchased the vertical, 30-taper RoboDrill from Methods Machine Tools Inc. (Sudbury, MA), the exclusive North American supplier



Fanuc RoboDrill 30-taper VMC makes quick work of parts at job shop Faber Machine Inc.

of Fanuc equipment. "I didn't have enough milling capacity for quick-turnaround work," he recalls. "I also needed to do some quick secondary

work on parts that we get off our turning centers."

With feed rates to 590 ipm (15 m/min), rapid traverses to 2125 ipm (54 m/min), accelerations to 1.5 G, and 0.9-second tool changes (tool-to-tool), the RoboDrill is faster than standard machining centers. But Faber quickly learned that the difference for some jobs is even greater.

For example, he had two identical lots of compressor housing castings. Each piece required a bearing bore and other drilled and tapped holes on three sides. He used one of his other machining centers to process the first lot. Then, making some minor changes to the CNC program, he used the RoboDrill for the second lot.

"The RoboDrill ran those parts about 40% quicker, and held better tolerances," he says. "The original cycle time was about 3.5 minutes overall. With the RoboDrill, the cycle time dropped to about 2.1 minutes." Faber mainly uses the machine for drilling and tapping, but says it has the "muscle" for milling as well.

He also praises the machine's Fanuc CNC, which at first seemed a bit intimidating. "I'll admit I was a bit scared of the control when I first got it. I was used to straight G-code programming. Once I realized all the standard stuff was still there, plus more, I quickly became comfortable with it." Faber says he used manuals to teach himself, and later trained an employee. ■