

Technical Member Profile: Tornos Technologies



Tornos Technologies is one of the world's leading manufacturers of Swiss machine tools and automatic lathes. The company had its beginnings in the Swiss watch-making industry, which is known for its emphasis on superior mechanical precision.

The first machines used to turn small parts for watches were produced in the late 1880s in Moutier, Switzerland, a region that is considered the birthplace of the precision-turned parts industry, as well as the Swiss sliding headstock lathe. It is for that reason that automatic, precision lathes are widely known as "Swiss-type" machines.

A pioneer in the manufacture of Swiss machines, Tornos developed the MS-7 lathe in the 1950s. That machine dominated the market for 30 years. The company began offering customers numerically controlled (NC) equipment in 1970. About that same time, Tornos merged with two of its competitors—Bechler and Petermann—to form a single company called Tornos-Bechler.

Today, Tornos Technologies is a world-class manufacturer of equipment for turning small, precision parts. In addition to its headquarters in Moutier, the company has operations throughout Europe and representation in more than 80 countries.

Tornos has three facilities in the United States: Bethel, Connecticut; Lombard, Illinois; and Brea, California. "With our three Centers of Excellence located

across North America, Tornos can respond to our customers quickly and completely," says Scott Kowalski, president of Tornos' operations for both North and South America. "In addition to getting faster response times for service, applications support and parts, any customer with a question can contact the company and speak to someone 24/7."

Besides manufacturing its own lines of Tornos automatic, single-spindle, sliding headstock and automatic, multi-spindle turning centers, the company imports ESCO turning centers for the American market. Tornos and ESCO products are used to produce precision parts for industries ranging from automotive to medical, as well as general engineering.

Mr. Kowalski states that his company sells to many of its fellow PMPA members. "We have strong relationships with the members we have sold to over the years," he says. "Our technical membership in the association has been a great way to strengthen those relationships and form new ones.

"Tornos has been a PMPA member for three decades and our membership is invaluable," says Mr. Kowalski. "We have direct interaction with the people who use our equipment on a daily basis. These individuals place a large portion of their organizations' successes and competitiveness in the hands of the machine tool builder. Tornos values their input at the highest level to ensure that we are producing equipment to give them an edge.

"It is important for Tornos to be part of this organization that serves our customers as a great information resource and networking tool," continues Mr. Kowalski. "The PMPA's benchmarking data on capital expenditures and business intelligence reports are a key to Tornos forecasting and business planning processes. The association also has a great library of technology articles and white papers to which we have referred on occasion."

As a technical member, Tornos not only offers PMPA member companies its vast knowledge of precision machining equipment, but also its expertise in global markets. "Tornos is an international company, so we have a broad perspective on what's going on in the world markets as far as precision machining," says Mr. Kowalski. "We're concerned about the same issues as our PMPA customers."

Mr. Kowalski began his career as a moldmaker, before moving to sales management and then to direct management. Having gone from the factory floor to the president's office, he knows what precision machining companies need to achieve high quality and stay competitive.

He laments the fact that many U.S. machinist jobs are going overseas, not just because of costs, but also because of a growing shortage of highly skilled workers. He says that can be associated, in part, to a general lack of awareness about the machining industry. "Our skilled workforce is declining," Mr. Kowalski explains. "As an industry, we need to do a better job of educating the younger generations about the substantial benefits of working in the precision machining industry so we can recruit enthusiastic, talented people in the coming years.

"In other countries, being a machinist is a highly respected occupation. In Germany, a top machinist is referred to as a 'surgeon of steel.' That person knows as much about machining and metallurgy as a surgeon knows about the human body. It is a prestigious career. People in this country don't understand or consider manufacturing as a whole."

He continues, "But no matter who is doing the work, everybody needs equipment to stay competitive. If this industry tells us anything, it's that we do not always know what work awaits us tomorrow. Therefore, we need equipment that is versatile in every

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