- Mr. Shigeyoshi Inoue
  CEO of Inoue Kouzai

Hypertherm®

Inoue Kouzai raises productivity with Hypertherm's X-Definition® plasma system

Industry: Manufacturing
Equipment: XPR300™

The company and products

In today's fiercely competitive manufacturing environment, the ability to maximize productivity while lowering costs is what sets companies apart from their competitors. Businesses are increasingly looking to the most cost-efficient solutions that also enable them to deliver the best quality products. For manufacturers in the metalworking industry, investing in cutting technologies that are capable of producing high-quality cut parts at fast speeds, and requires little or no post-production processes, is one of the most crucial management decisions.

Based in Kofu, Yamanashi, Japan, Inoue Kouzai Co., Ltd. manufactures steel and non-ferrous parts for a variety of companies, including those from the construction and machinery industries. Since its inception in 1964, Inoue Kouzai has gained a solid reputation due to its emphasis on maintaining customers' trust and keeping a good record. Inoue Kouzai is also constantly in pursuit of ways to respond to its customers' diversifying needs, in the interest of retaining its competitive edge.

The problem

Inoue Kouzai works with several types of metals like mild steel, stainless steel, and aluminum to produce parts for construction and machinery companies. It was important for the company to invest in a cutting system that could perform well on a variety of metals and different types of thickness without compromising on cut quality.

The solution

To raise its operational efficiency, Inoue Kouzai decided to invest in Hypertherm's latest X-Definition plasma system, the XPR300. This move allowed the team at Inoue Kouzai to attain optimal productivity, coupled with lower operating costs and better cut quality.

Modern plasma cutting systems have been proven to produce high-quality cuts in the most cost-efficient manner on a myriad of metal types and thicknesses. However, with the recent technological advancements, the X-Definition plasma technology enhances the XPR300's ability to tackle high-precision applications. When installed on a high-quality cutting machine and equipped with linear ways and elliptical racks, the XPR300 is capable of maintaining ISO 9013 Class 1 and 2 tolerances, and ISO 9013 Range 2 and 3 cut quality. When compared to the XPR300, other alternatives like laser systems required a significantly higher initial investment outlay, while oxy-fuel systems were unable to match the cutting speed and accuracy that the XPR300 offered.

In addition, what Inoue Kouzai found attractive was also Hypertherm's high level of service standards. The Hypertherm team offered timely response and support to address Inoue Kouzai's every concern, right from the early stages of decision-making through to after-sales assistance.

Commenting on the company's reasons for choosing Hypertherm, Mr. Shigeyoshi Inoue, CEO of Inoue Kouzai, shared, "Hypertherm stood out from everyone else that we were considering mainly because of the rapport we felt with the representatives right from the start, as well as the team's sincerity and warmth."

The benefits

Within just months of adopting the Hypertherm innovation, the manufacturer began to reap numerous benefits. Having previously used Hypertherm's earlier high-definition plasma cutting system — HPR260XD®, Inoue Kouzai immediately noticed the improvements the XPR300 has made over the earlier system.

With the XPR300 system, Inoue Kouzai can deliver an edge surface finish that is smoother than that produced with the HPR260XD and extremely consistent edge quality over the full life of a consumable set. The team at Inoue Kouzai now has the ability to fabricate parts with significantly improved edge angularity and cut quality at a lower cost using the XPR300 system, when compared with other plasma or laser cutting systems.

The significantly improved cutting speed and cut quality raised Inoue Kouzai's ability to fulfill their orders dramatically. In fact, due to increasing demand from their customers over the last couple of years, the manufacturer had been tackling the issue of backorders, and the addition of the XPR300 provided a much-needed boost to their production process.

"With the new XPR300 plasma system, our production team has been able to catch up with the back-orders," shared Mr. Yuji Komatsu, Factory Manager. "The quality of our products is also of utmost importance, and the precise cutting that the XPR300 allows for helps us to ensure we can maintain our excellence while improving our yield."

Another significant benefit was the improved consumable life, which in turn reduced operating costs for Inoue Kouzai. The highly sophisticated design of the XPR300 includes an Arc Response Technology™ with automatic torch and ramp-down error protection. Sensors in the power supply deliver refined diagnostic codes and enhanced system monitoring information that reduces troubleshooting time and provides proactive system maintenance data for improved system optimization. As a result, the lifespan of consumables is increased by three times, through eliminating the impact of ramp down errors.

"We've been using Hypertherm's industrial cutting solutions for some time now and it has worked well for us, providing us with exactly what we needed to satisfy our customers," shared Mr. Inoue. "Our investment in the XPR300 has given us consistent and quality results at a production rate that we're tremendously pleased with."

Today, the Hypertherm XPR300 has become such an integral part of Inoue Kouzai's production process that the team uses it every day of the week.

Mr. Inoue concludes, "We'll continue to leverage on Hypertherm's XPR300 system as it has worked well for us. In addition, we'll definitely recommend the X-Definition plasma cutting systems to others looking for a cutting solution that provides improved cut quality, cut speed, and system run time."

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