



EXPANDING the possibilities

Metal Processing Corp. goes above and beyond typical toll processing services

BY ABBE MILLER

Considering the custom nature of a roll former, there really is no average size. The consistent characteristic of the equipment, simply put, is that it's large. The real estate required for just one line is significant.

Take Jamé Roll Form Products Inc., Franklin Park, Ill., for example. When the company got its start in the early 1980s, it had one roll former and 10,000 square feet of space. In those early days, a relatively small Chicago warehouse was sufficient for the company's immediate needs.

As the years passed, however, Jamé

began to acquire more customers, and more customers meant more equipment. And more equipment, especially in the way of roll formers, meant more space. Eventually, Jamé accumulated 10 roll formers and 110,000 square feet in which to house them.

Today, the company has the capability to produce more than 500 different products on those 10 lines. Bob Perkaus, president of Jamé, says a lot of what the company is making consists of items for the truck trailer industry, but new markets are helping diversify revenue streams, too.

"We're developing new products, such as the grape stake, which is a pre-punched, variable-length fence post for the wine industry, which effectively replaces traditional grapevine fence posts

with a more durable, cost-effective solution," says Perkaus. "More and more, customers needing a consistent, high-run-rate product are looking to roll forming. If you're making 20 parts, it's likely to be cheaper and easier for you to take a piece of metal, cut it to length and then press brake it. If you're making 10,000 parts, then it really makes financial sense to look into roll forming.

"With the roll former, we can make products up to 60 feet in length," he continues. "Along with side post and roof bow supports for the truck trailer industry, we roll form the interior liner plate ('Scuff plate'), also. Cut to customer-tailored lengths, the Scuff plate is placed inside the trailer to prevent the forklift tines from poking through the trailer's side. Customers then align the Scuff plate's pre-punched holes to fit directly over the studs and screw them on. Job done."

The material that's used for those truck trailer products, and all of Jamé's products

At Jamé Roll Form Products' 110,000-square-foot facility, 10 roll formers, eight press brakes and additional processing equipment produce more than 500 different products.



in general, is predominantly galvanized steel, typically high-strength, low-alloy material. The company's roll formers can effectively handle 26-gauge material up to $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch material.

"We buy prime because it's just easier and not problematic, like non-prime materials can be," says Perkaus. "Your time and reputation for excellence are invaluable, and you can't take a chance on having improper material."

Usually, the prime material that Perkaus purchases has a 20-inch ID and a 70-inch to 72-inch OD. To roll form it, the material first must be slit—the 10 roll form machines at Jamé have a maximum capacity of coils 30 inches wide and 20,000 pounds.

Rapid response

When it comes to equipment, coil processing lines are some of the biggest. For Jamé, moving a slitter next to its collection of space-hungry roll formers wasn't a feasible option. That's where toll processor Metal Processing Corp., Gary, Ind., came

into play. MPC isn't like every other toll processor, though.

The company has multiple coil processing lines to slit, blank and cut to length its customers' material, and the breadth of material MPC can handle has increased according to those customers' needs. It has a slitting range of 1 inch to 72 inches. Its cut-to-length capacity reaches 72 inches, as well.

"We've had a relationship with MPC since their business started," says Perkaus. "When they came on the scene, we were one of their first customers. They responded to our needs by expanding and upgrading their equipment to handle bigger coils. Over the years, MPC has upgraded their equipment to handle everything that we do. At one time, they couldn't handle $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch material. As demand began to accelerate, they responded to meet the need."

MPC recognized that its customers had growing needs, and the company was quickly able to deliver. MPC also acknowledges the fact that customers occasionally have unexpected needs. In the same fashion, MPC is able to act fast.

"Sometimes we'll get an order from a customer who needs product urgently," says Perkaus. "If we don't have the materials slit on the floor, while we're changing over the roll forming machine, MPC will be slitting the material. With overnight delivery, we can start roll forming the material the next morning. Obviously, that can't happen all the time, but it happens once in a while and often enough to know that we can depend on MPC to do the work quickly so that we meet our obligations and keep our customers satisfied. We keep MPC happy by giving them our business, and they keep us happy by enabling us to meet our business objectives. It's a good relationship."

Room to breathe

Responding to market demands in terms of coil capacity and just-in-time processing are just a few of the ways MPC goes above and beyond the duties of a toll processor. The company understands the value of manufacturing space and offers warehousing as an additional service to its cus-

tomers. For some manufacturers with limited storage space, MPC acts as a home away from home.

Customers can take advantage of MPC's 300,000 square feet of climate-controlled space with rail access into the plant that can handle three railcars under the roof at the same time. And with that space comes eight cranes, eight shipping docks and two receiving lanes to make loading and unloading as easy as if it were the customer's own facility. MPC's barcode inventory tracking system keeps material from getting lost.

"We have kept, and continue to keep, raw material at their plant that they process for us," says Perkaus. "Consequently, we keep our slit coil inventory at a lower level, so we need much less room to store it."

The saved space makes room for more equipment, such as Jamé's eight press brakes and additional processing equipment.

Because MPC doesn't sell its own material—it only processes the material customers bring in—it offers testing for customers who need it. If Perkaus were ever concerned about the quality of his material, he could always have MPC run a Rockwell test to determine whether it meets his customers' needs.

At the end of the day, MPC is able to offer its customers the peace of mind that comes from quality service. And in an indirect manner, it gives its customers room to grow, however they see fit. Perkaus appreciates that relationship.

"We chose a long time ago not to get into the processing business, so we knew that we would need to have someone doing that for us, and MPC has been an excellent partner in that function," he says. "They're honest, straightforward people, and we're glad that they benefit from our business as much as we benefit from theirs." ■

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