

// by Robert Farrell, president, Farrell Marcom LLC //

NEW ENDEAVORS

A long-time CNC machine tool solutions provider ventures into the fabrication realm



United Precision Services Inc., a provider of turnkey medium to large CNC machine tool solutions, recently announced its entry into the fabrication market with the creation of a fabrication machinery division. At the same time, the company announced a partnership with MicroStep. Danie Jacobs, president of United Precision, and John Previs, national sales manager, discuss what prompted these moves and why MicroStep was the preferred partner.

Neither of you are strangers to the metal fabrication and machine tool industries. Can you provide a quick recap of your background?

DJ: My experience includes more than 33 years of owning and managing organizations in the machine tool industry. Over this time, I've seen some big changes and become extremely familiar with various cutting and forming technologies.

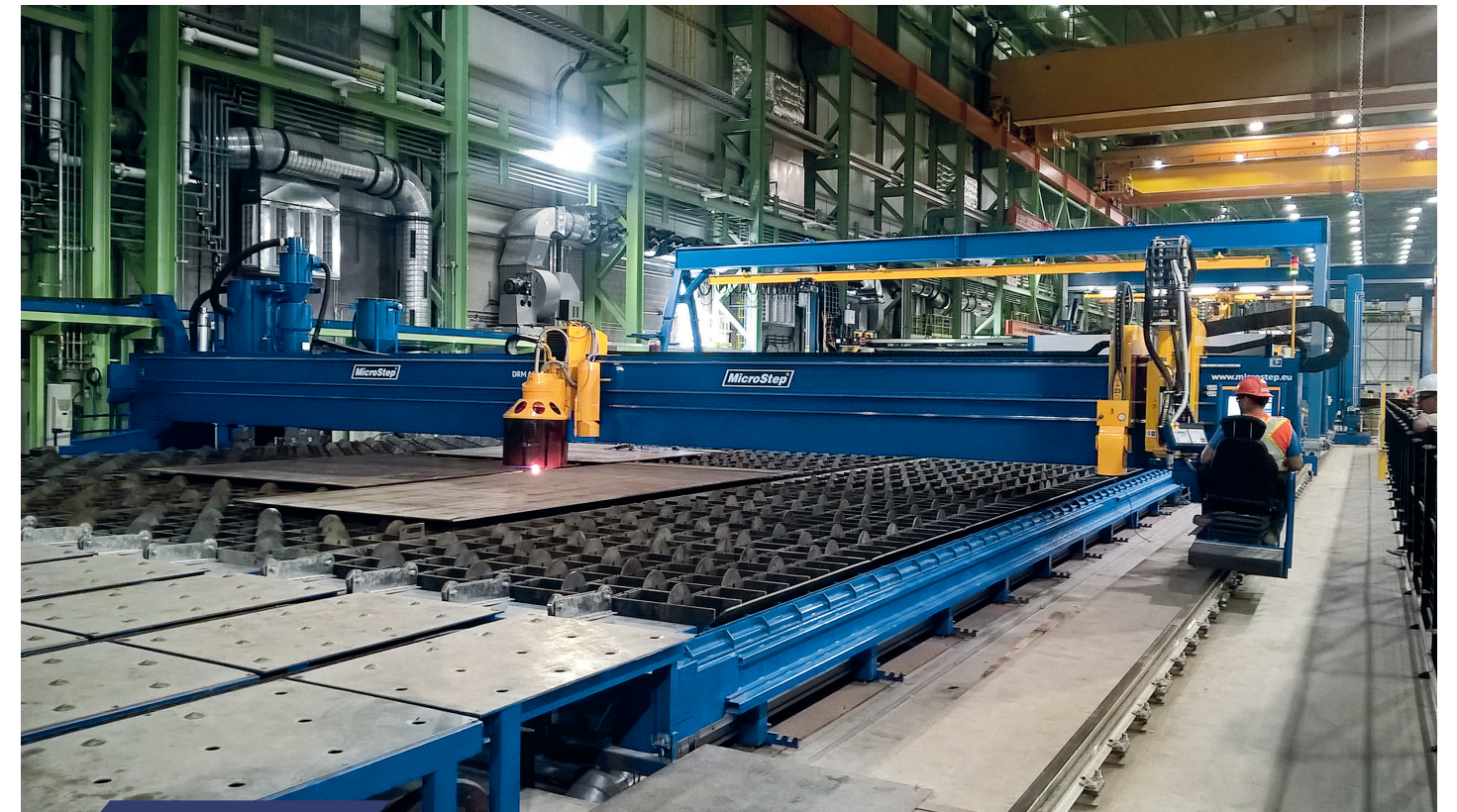
JP: My background mirrors Danie's to a certain extent in that the bulk of

my career has been in manufacturing. I've been in the industry for 25 years, having held technical sales and management positions with a leading metal fabrication machinery OEM and a senior level position at an OEM that had extensive fabrication capabilities. I recently joined United Precision to manage the fabrication machinery division.

Speaking of the evolution of manufacturing, I imagine that you've both seen some big changes in the industry. What stands out?

DJ: Without a doubt, the automation surge has been staggering. From material handling and lights-out production to 3-D printing, cloud-based connectivity and smart technologies, manufacturing has undergone a radical transformation in the past decade alone.

JP: I would agree. Automation has been an important part of the equation for many years, but recently it's been kicked into high gear due to the unanticipated labor shortage that has affected manufacturing and many



↑ *United Precision recently announced that it is now the authorized importer and distributor of MicroStep 2-D and 3-D plasma, oxyfuel, laser, waterjet, pipe and profile, dome and structural beam processing equipment throughout North America.*

other industries, as well. We've also noticed that many manufacturers are seeking out complete process solutions that are more tailored to their specific operation from beginning to end. These might include software solutions that not only program multi-purpose machinery, but also plan and coordinate the entire process to help reduce costs. Today's sophisticated solutions are allowing

companies to reach new levels of efficiency, throughput and, ultimately, profitability.

United Precision is a powerhouse in the chip making market, so what's behind the decision to take on a line of fabrication machinery?

DJ: The addition of fabrication machinery complements our line >



↑ *In times of labor shortages, automated material loading and unloading as well as smart machine controls allow fabricators to meet tight production schedules.*

of medium- to large-platform CNC machine tools and further solidifies us as one of North America's premier machine tool providers. Today's fabricators are demanding greater flexibility from their equipment investments, and United Precision is bringing innovative solutions to the North American market from leading international manufacturers. This ability to provide a turnkey solution offering

new levels of automation and tailored to specific and unique applications is what distinguishes us from competitors.

Machine tools represent a significant investment. How does United Precision work with its customers to help maximize return on investment?

JP: Investment is the key word. Simply buying a machine will >

“We’ve noticed that many manufacturers are seeking out complete process solutions that are more tailored to their specific operation from beginning to end.”

*// John Previsch, national sales manager,
United Precision Services Inc. //*



↑ *MicroStep provides 3-D beveling with its patented auto calibration of tool geometry technology as well as a rotator beveling head.*

deliver incremental productivity improvements but it's important to invest in a machine that is going to boost throughput and efficiency exponentially. Danie mentioned automation. The industry has long experienced a shortage of skilled machine operators and programmers; today that need is magnified

considerably. Automation allows fabricators to meet tight production schedules by eliminating many manual time-consuming steps.

We also work in partnership with our customers. We understand that the customer may be using these machines for 20 years and more,

thus the ability to service and support the machinery is very important. United Precision has factory-trained service engineers to ensure that all machines perform to their designed specifications throughout their life cycle. This all adds up to maximizing an ROI in the shortest time possible.

How important is tailoring a machine to a customer's requirements?

JP: Manufacturers shouldn't be forced to settle for what's available from their machinery provider. We're an industry leader for a reason. If a manufacturer needs a piece of machinery modified or customized to a specific application, then that's what we provide.

DJ: To John's point, this is critical to ROI. Rather than provide a standard fabrication machine that might only meet 80 percent of the customers objectives, we tailor a total equipment solution to fulfill not only the customers short-term applications, but also provide add-on capabilities to address anticipated future requirements. Maintaining a

partnership throughout the machine's lifecycle is another way that we demonstrate the service that our customers have come to expect.

What can you tell us about the collaboration with MicroStep announced earlier this summer?

DJ: We were very excited to make this announcement. MicroStep has built a stellar global track record for quality, reliability and innovative solutions. United Precision will become the authorized importer and distributor of MicroStep 2-D and 3-D plasma, oxyfuel, laser, waterjet, pipe and profile, dome and structural beam processing equipment throughout North America. This is big news for us. These machines complement our current product offerings, and we will ensure that our customers receive the benefits.

Why MicroStep? What would you like readers to know about them?

DJ: This partnership makes a lot of sense for both organizations. MicroStep offers a variety of automation and software solutions >

“Today’s fabricators are demanding greater flexibility from their equipment investments.”

// Danie Jacobs, president, United Precision Services Inc. //

that address complex manufacturing challenges. The company’s philosophy is to deliver machines that are an integrated part of the production workflow by exchanging information, predicting breakdowns and automating the material flow throughout the customer’s production cycle. United Precision is an established company with a full-service group providing installation, service and customization, and MicroStep sees us as an organization that can help them to grow in the North America market.

MicroStep ranks among the world’s largest producers of large-table

plasma cutting machines with high-end beveling and dome cutting capabilities as well as the ability to integrate secondary operations such as drilling and marking into one machine configuration. Their rapid growth combined with their successes in the global market is due to their innovative technologies, quality, performance and reliability. This makes them an excellent fit for us because it aligns with our values and strategies.

JP: We’re excited about this partnership because of the uniqueness it provides, along with an opportunity to fill a real need for more

sophisticated applications tailored to a customer’s specific application. Across Europe, MicroStep is a huge and highly respected player in the industry. Fabricators in North America may not be familiar with the name, but that is going to quickly change.

Innovation can be hard to quantify. Can you elaborate?

JP: Again, here’s where automation comes in. Many industry applications

require 3-D bevel cutting. MicroStep has taken the 3-D beveling process to a much higher level using their patented auto calibration of tool geometry technology and rotator beveling head. The bevel pivot point is in a natural stable position, meaning that the rotation axis and tilting axis are intersecting at one point. The machine does not need to perform reversal movements when changing from straight contours to radius/arc contours. >



In addition to MicroStep’s range of fabricating equipment, United Precision is also a provider of MicroStep’s machine production management software.



↑ *With a range of customers with a variety of needs, United Precision is able to provide equipment for the smallest or largest tasks at hand.*

In addition, MicroStep utilizes adaptive bevel compensation and self-teaching height control to greatly improve the precision of cut parts.

DJ: Another example is dome processing of pressure vessel tank ends. An advanced 3-D scanning process with MicroStep's mScan

technology allows the machine to achieve precision in 3-D cutting. This results in accurate trimming, separation cuts, cutting of diverse openings and weld edge preparation across the whole dome surface.

These features translate into measurable and sustained

improvements to efficiency, productivity and profitability.

What about software? Or, are you strictly dealing with machinery?

JP: Along with machines, we're also a provider of MicroStep's machine production management (MPM) software. MPM is an integrated order processing, nesting, stock management, machine operation planning and evaluation system that interconnects pre-production data, control systems of CNC machines and MicroStep's automatic nesting software. It helps to reduce work in progress, saves material and eliminates operator errors.

Did United Precision form a fabrication machinery division to support this new business?

DJ: Yes. The business was created to provide machinery sales, assembly, installation, training and service to support our expansion into the fabrication machinery market. Eighty percent of our customers already do some form of fabrication, and we became acutely aware of the fact that if we can supply a good solution to

their requirements, it complements our machine offerings while giving our customers a single source supplier. Needless to say, this group will be instrumental to the success of our entry into the fabrication market.

JP: United Precision Services is a recognized, established and respected name throughout the industry. That's not something that just happens. This pride is reflected in each machine that goes out the door. The company's values and commitment to ensure that each customer is getting exactly the equipment they need and the full support they deserve is important to me. I'm excited to be a part of a company that's putting innovative metal processing capabilities within reach of every fabricator. ■

UNITED PRECISION SERVICES INC. →