Hypertherm®

Thilot Holland implements ProNest® to program Flow waterjet machine

Industry: Manufacturing
Equipment: ProNest®

The company and products

Thilot Holland BV (www.thilot.nl), of Lottum, Netherlands is the world's leading manufacturer of phase I composting plants, phase II and III tunnel operations, as well as equipment and machines for mushroom farming. Thilot also designs and manufactures a variety of other machinery and they operate a subcontract job-shop waterjet cutting operation using their Flow waterjet cutting machine. Thilot has been in business for more than forty years and their objective in business is to deliver better value through increased performance, reliability and quality.

Programming challenge

In today's world of machinery design it is increasingly popular to select a 3D CAD software program to create the entire product design. These software programs, including SOLIDWORKS®, Creo Elements Pro (Pro/Engineer®), and Inventor™, have helped revolutionize the design process and significantly reduce the product development cycle; but at a price for those processing sheet and plate materials. Rudy Thielen, owner of Thilot states the challenges they faced working with 3D part drawings (which need to be flattened before they are nested and cut) – "We had been using the software that came with our Flow waterjet machine (FlowCut). Although a bit limiting in certain applications we had to make do with it for processing our 2D DXF files. Then, when we decided to shift to Inventor for our design process (where 3D files are standard), creating the 2D DXF files needed to interface with FlowCut became an additional process that took a lot of extra time. We also had to be careful that any changes we made to the 3D files were updated to the 2D files. The process became very tedious so we decided to look for a programming solution."

Photo courtesy of Flow International, Corp.

Problem solved

After some internet research, Rudy found ProNest software and discussed his dilemma with the Hypertherm Europe team. They explained that with ProNest and its optional Inventor 3D CAD Interface module, Thilot would be able to directly import 3D files flattened and ready for use. Rudy was also provided with details on the optional ProNest modules specifically developed for waterjet applications. The next day, Hypertherm used online meeting technology to remotely install a fully functional trial of ProNest with the Inventor interface so that Rudy could see the power of the total solution for himself. ProNest not only provided Rudy with the 3D CAD interface, but also CAD line-color mapping to give specific feedrate values and the native *.ORD CNC file format used with his Flow waterjet machine. Within a few days, Rudy made the decision to purchase the ProNest solution and now has the following to say – "The new software (ProNest) has already started to save us a lot of programming time by using the Inventor 3D CAD interface. In addition, we have been experimenting with the Automatic Nesting module and have definitely gained material savings from the improved nest utilization.

Overall, the operation of ProNest with our system is seamless and I am confident that the software will pay for itself many times over in the coming years." As Thilot continue with their business, they will be able to add further optional ProNest modules which will allow even greater productivity with their Flow waterjet machine – including Common Line Cutting and Collision Avoidance. Productivity made easy!

One of Hypertherm's long-standing core values is a focus on minimizing our impact on the environment. Doing so is critical to our, and our customers' success. We are always striving to become better environmental stewards; it is a process we care deeply about.