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Saws: A moving story

Like many other machine tool builders, **Behringer Saws Inc.** hosts open house events that invite customers and prospective customers to learn about metal cutting technology. Obviously, in this case, visitors to the Behringer Sawing Symposium and Exhibition, held this week at the company's Morgantown, Pa., facility, were learning about sawing.

Behringer officials were quick to point out to visitors the band saws' cast-iron frames, made in the company's own foundry in Germany, and dual-column structure that provides great support for the blades and minimizes vibrations. Company management is proud of the saws' designs, which they believe help to deliver cutting tolerances that fabricators may find quite surprising.

But perhaps most surprising of all was that material handling was addressed during product presentations and technology discussions as a means of increasing productivity. Cutting and blade technology can push the productivity envelope, but real improvements can be gained by efficiently getting raw material to the saws and moving cut pieces on to secondary processes.

For example, Behringer Saws President Richard Klipp described how one customer installed more than 100 feet of conveyor on the back *and* front of an HBP-530/1104 saw he purchased. The material loader is not an unusual purchase and made a lot of sense for the company because three very large bars of steel could be loaded and then rolled into place for sawing quite easily. The operator was no longer at the mercy of the heavily used crane. The material unloader was more unusual, but once again worked out well because the operator could simply push cut parts one way directly into a shipping container and remnants the other way for delivery back to inventory.

In another example, Behringer engineers developed a "hex" bundle clamp for its HBP-413A series of saws. This clamp fits around bundles of bars or tubes that are delivered in a common hexagon shape. The operator can move the material delivery from the truck to the saw bed, without even having to worry about unbundling the material. The clamp is tight enough that the operator doesn't have to worry about interior bar or pipe spinning around and possibly destroying the band saw blade while it moves down through the material during the cutting process.

Typically, someone would have to weld the ends of the bar or tube together to prevent material from spinning and to keep the structure of the hexagon during sawing. Now that very labor-intensive practice is no longer needed.

Of course, fast is always impressive. Behringer featured its HBM-540-ALU saw that powers a band saw blade up to 4,000 FPM. It sliced through aluminum barstock repeatedly in less than a minute, catching the attention of most visitors as the saw emanated a high-pitch sound when the blade hit the metal.

Metal fabricators may be in a position to consider a purchase of a saw or other machine tool as the economy appears to have hit bottom, according to Chris Kuehl, co-founder of Armada Corporate Intelligence and chief economist for the Fabricators & Manufacturers Association. During his keynote address on Thursday at the symposium, Kuehl told the crowd that economic indicators, such as the increasing Purchasing Managers Index, suggest that businesses are breaking out of their "hunker-down" mentalities. Even the recent dip in customer purchasing activity is misleading, Kuehl said, because people are seeking out deals on televisions and home electronics, a sign that they aren't afraid to spend discretionary income.

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