

# TechUpdate

## Automatic Pallet Loader Now Patented

Red Bud Industries, Red Bud, IL, has been granted U.S. Patent Number 6,942,444 for its skid-positioning machine. The automatic pallet loader can be used to load and position empty skids in the stacking system of a blanking or multi-blanking line while the rollout conveyor discharges the finished stacks.

Says Dean Linders, Red Bud vice president of sales and marketing: "When multi-blanking, several individual skids are frequently used at one time. Because strip dividers separate and create the individual stacks, a gap must be left between the skids when they are positioned in the stacker. This allows the strip dividers to fall between the skids as they are lifted into the run position. The pallet loader allows the skids to be set up in their proper orientation offline while the line runs. When needed, the operator loads the



empty skids into the stacker with the push of a button.

"The system automatically maintains the gap between skids and precisely locates

them relative to the strip dividers," he adds.

**For more information from Red Bud Industries, write no. 350 on your reader response card.**

## Online Marketplace Fuels Job-Shop Growth

A.P.S. Metal Industries Inc., Pickering, Ontario, Canada, specializes in stainless-steel fabricating and forming of a variety of products—food-processing equipment, hoppers, chutes, mixers, conveyor-system parts, etc. The company employs 70 in a flexible two-shift schedule out of a 30,000-sq.-ft. facility.

Production capabilities include laser cutting to large-capacity requirements up to ¼-in.-thick aluminum, ¾-in. mild steel and 5/8-in. stainless.

“Our three Trumpf L-3030 4000-w laser cutters offer a productive mix of speed, versatility and precision,” owner Andy Pavletich says. “Flying optics allow



**These Amada machines are just two of nine press brakes that help round out the capabilities at A.P.S. Metal Industries Inc., Pickering, Ontario, Canada.**

the cutting head to move while the material stays flat on the table.”

Production capabilities are rounded out by numerous welding stations, a complete machine shop, nine press brakes, hardware inserters, shearing and notching capabilities, single-station punch presses and a clean-up area with deburring machinery.

Rob Zakojc, A.P.S. purchasing and materials manager, used the Internet to find new customers, but identifying a prospect with fabrication and forming requirements was a challenge. Then he discovered MFG.com, an online marketplace for the manufacturing community that matches buyer requirements with potential suppliers.

“With MFG.com, I’m able to check at any time of the day what RFQs are out there,” he says. “If they match our capabilities and capacity, I’ll bid. I can easily pull down and process 50 RFQs a day. Sales have increased by 4.5 percent in the last four months, and we’re just getting our feet wet.

“A lot of the jobs we’re getting are sub-contract work, basically on parts a company would make themselves, but due to capacity issues, or perhaps there are components on the part that they have to sub-contract anyway, they just let us do the whole part instead sending us just the fabrication part of the job,” he continues. “And, it’s not always about price, because we’re not always the lowest price. We’re looking for repeat business, and being the lowest-cost bidder isn’t going to get you that. You get that by developing a strong relationship with a customer, one where they know your quality and your will-

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ingness to meet tight deliveries when necessary. They come to know what to expect and the value they place on that often obviates the cost issue.”

Zakojc says that one of the reasons A.P.S. joined MFG.com was to broaden its exposure to potential new customers.

“The fact that we’re Canadian,” he says, “a lot of these customers would not have even thought to look here. At the same time I wouldn’t have thought to look at some of the smaller areas in the United States or even assume that I would work for these companies. The site makes everybody my neighbor.”

**For more from MFG.com, write no. 351 on your reader response card.**

## Shear Takes on 16-Gauge Steel

The Bradbury Co., Inc., Moundridge, KS, has introduced a heavy-duty version of its B.O.S.S. shear, modified to handle 16-gauge steel. According to company officials, the new shear is intended for producers of heavier-gauge building components. The model cuts 16-gauge steel with yield strength in the 40,000-psi range and runs 48-in.-wide coils at the same 10-parts/200 ft./min. speed as the standard B.O.S.S. Shear, rated for 18-gauge steel.

Like its 18-gauge counterpart, the heavy-duty version uses Bradbury’s high-speed, closed-loop flying-shear mechanism to achieve rapid close-tolerance shearing. Length and batch information can be entered at the control station or downloaded from a remote computer. There are no hydraulic functions. An AC servomotor accelerates the shear head through a robust mechanical linkage. Dual acceleration arms and stable heavy-duty linear bearings contribute to accurate cuts and machine durability. As the shear head travels out to match the speed of the production line, the linkage rotates it and pulls it down for the cut in a smooth orbital motion that eliminates much of the noise, potential for strip damage and painting marking.

As sheetmetal approaches the work rolls, its speed is monitored, and speed variations in the line or rollformer do not affect cut accuracy. The scissor-like cutting action prevents burring. To reduce sharpening requirements, the top and bottom blade can be reversed.

The four main work rolls correct bow and coilset in the uncut sheetmetal.

Other enhancements for the 16-gauge model include a more powerful electric motor and larger linear bearings to support the shear head. The shear can be close-coupled to new or existing production lines to reduce floor space.

**For more information from The Bradbury Group, write no. 352 on your reader response card.**