

THE FUTURE LIES IN AUTOMATION

Pete Shaw is a man who loves a challenge. The local Kilcoy man launched Pacific Manufacturing in Queensland in 2006. A small shop run by himself and a friend, its work centres on building tractor slashers and shade umbrellas. Now, after investing in an ART CNC heavy-duty plasma profile cutter, he is ready for growth.

BY BARBARA SCHULZ
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Kilcoy is a warm, inviting country town about 100km northwest of Brisbane. Situated at the northern edge of Lake Somerset, you can experience some of the most breathtaking scenery in South East Queensland. From the majestic beauty of Lake Somerset to the rugged, timeless forests of Jimna, Kilcoy is a wonderfully central location and offers good old-fashioned friendly service; and people.

Local Pete Shaw is a man who loves a challenge. Rather than follow his job in Asia, the experienced pilot decided

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Dealing with ART is an absolute hassle-free pleasure. From the initial dealings to ensure we chose the best machine and options to suit our needs, to the incredibly reliable backup they gave us, and continue to do so, if necessary, to help get us up to speed.

to swap jumbo jets for country life and manufacturing. So in 2006 he commenced the process of starting his own manufacturing business. And it turned out to be a real challenge.

“When the opportunity came knocking to buy the rights to

make shade umbrellas and tractor slashers, we decided to take it,” remembers Pete. “We started this business with a welder, a hand-held plasma and a bandsaw and off we went. Over the years the business has slowly grown, but not at the pace that we would have liked.

“We had support from an engineer who provided us with the engineering drawings we needed. However, we still had the problem of getting these plans into reality given the capabilities of the equipment we had available. There are limitations in the accuracy and consistency obtainable from using manual machinery. It was taking too much time grinding and finishing the components to make them fit.”

“It was very frustrating,” Pete continues. “When you’re flying a plane, everything has to be precise.” He laughs and adds “and this was pretty imprecise!”

As a consequence, Pete sought different avenues to improve the processes. Being successful in today’s highly-competitive manufacturing industry requires determination and innovative minds, and Pete possesses both and soon found a solution for the business: Automation.

“After consulting different manufacturers, technology and machines, we decided to buy an ART 4700HDP HyDefinition CNC plasma cutter,” Pete says. “It was a huge investment for us. And if you don’t use this sort of machin-



Pacific Manufacturing’s Pete Shaw in front of his recently installed ART 4700HDP HyDefinition CNC plasma cutter. “The quality, accuracy and consistency of the work have to be seen to be believed. We are doing work now we could never have dreamed of just a year ago.”

ery enough it is difficult to justify the investment. But on the other hand, how do you justify not investing in it?”

Pacific Manufacturing has come a long way since installing the machine and Pete has never looked back since that day ART installed the machine in March 2011.

“Of course there were cheaper options for CNC machinery,” Pete says. “But the benefit of buying an Australian-made machine from a real Australian company has many benefits. ART’s team has provided us with extensive training and if we need further guidance, ART is just a phone call away. Additionally, they have the remote access facility to the machine from Brisbane and our problems are solved instantly. Moreover, the learning process has been a steep curve. But the people at ART have minimised this gradient significantly. For us it’s a challenge ten times over - but we’re enjoying it!”

ART HDP plasma cutters offer precise heavy-duty cutting of mild steel, stainless steel and aluminium and come with a process area from 3700mm x 1900mm up to 15000mm x 3200mm. The machines deliver economic processing of high-standard cut components with an edge quality that is comparable with laser cutting. Moreover, an efficient fume extraction system ensures the air is kept clean at all times.

ART has developed the high definition CNC plasma cutter range specifically for heavy-duty manufacturing environments, where power, precision, speed, quality, low cost, productivity and durability are demanded by business owners.

At the same time, ART has made sure that their machines are easy to operate and the software and controller are intuitive. The machines feature both touch screen and pendant control, providing a quick and simple means of entering

machine instructions, editing parts, moving, resizing and more, all at the machine or remotely from the PC.

"This machine now gives us our first touch of being able to produce truly professional products," Pete says. "The accuracy involved is beyond comprehension, assembly is much easier and the best thing is, we now have total control over our production."

The ability to provide particular custom-engineered designs for slashers was hampered in the past, when Pacific Manufacturing relied heavily on outside suppliers for manufactured parts. The restriction on customer service was just one of the costs of outsourcing, Pete says. "If a supplier let us down, we had to then apologise to our customers. This became very frustrating and a very negative process."

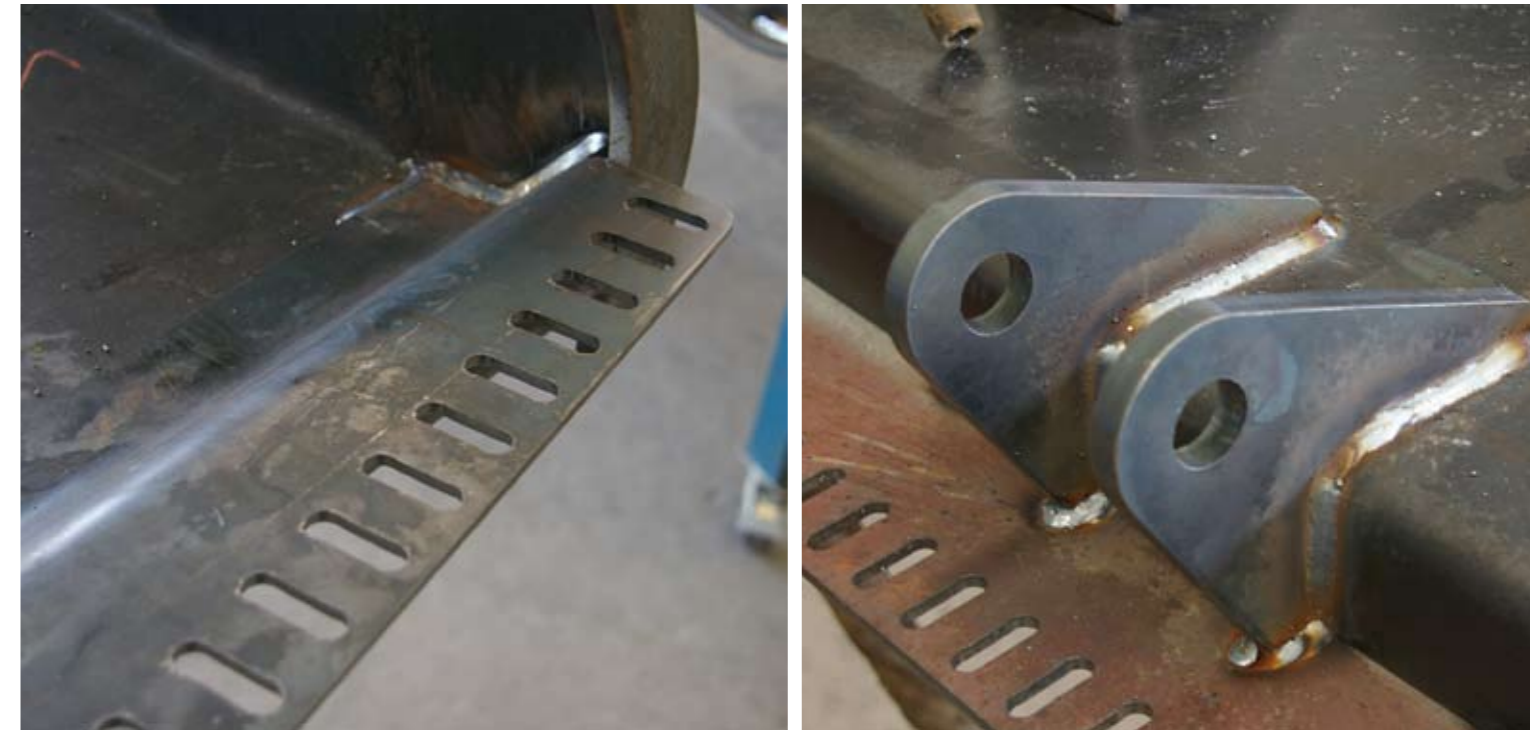
"In the past, the size of the slashers we made was determined according to the components we could source. These invariably came from overseas. With the click of a

computer mouse we are now able to make slashers and other components at a size that the customer needs. If someone comes in here now, we can customise the job to his demands and specifications."

"What we have now is control of pretty much everything,"



The CNC plasma cutter provides Pacific Manufacturing with the ability to cut the beams and blades from spring steel in-house. Eliminating outsourcing has provided the company with control over all production processes.



ART's Hypertherm true-hole technology eliminates all additional work and grinding of holes after cutting. Parts are cut with precision and Pacific Manufacturing can provide more peculiar custom-engineered designs for tractor slashers.

Pete continues. "We used to outsource our profile cutting, which could delay production for a couple of weeks and cost us heavily in production time. Now we do everything in-house and can deliver on time. When someone rang me two days ago for instance, he said he needed the slasher yesterday, with an offset, protection chains and a couple of other customisations. He couldn't believe it when I told him I'd deliver the slasher in two days on Thursday."

Other problems in the past related to quality and accuracy. With little control over machining processes located in external facilities, the company often had to invest time and resources toward assuring the quality of critical parts coming in. There was a lot of manual work involved to make parts fit. Pete remembers that all the unnecessary extra work started to result in stress and for him, work has to be fun. "Apart from the incredible time savings as well as the quality of the work the machine produces, the experience

with this ART profile cutter has eliminated so much stress and frustration from the factory, we are finding a new level of contentment at work. Getting the job done is now just so easy for everyone!"

ART's Hypertherm true-hole technology eliminates all additional work and grinding of holes after cutting.

"Basically, if you are going to compete today, you can't do it without automation," Pete says. "The salvation of our country depends on automation. And you gotta have stuff that works, is consistent, reliable, and that's what this machine does. Confidence is a huge thing."

"We have to work a little harder, a little bit longer, and for a little bit less - but you have to work smarter," Pete concludes. "And with our ART CNC plasma cutter we are not only making things smarter, we are making them so much better. This machine should be working 24/7 and that's where I'd like to go."

About Advanced Robotic Technology (ART)

Advanced Robotic Technology is Australia's premier manufacturer of CNC routers and plasma cutters, based in Brisbane, QLD. Since 1997 all ART machines have been manufactured to the highest standards in our purpose-built factory. ART's range of CNC routers and plasma cutters are custom-built to meet industry specific requirements. Most ART machines in our CNC router or plasma cutter range can be modified to our customers' specific business needs in regards to material dimensions and additional tooling requirements. More info: www.advancedrobotic.com