

Somta Tools launches expanded carbide tooling facility

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Given that there is no other facility on the African continent that boasts the combined manufacturing, measuring, coating and testing capabilities contained in Somta's expanded carbide facility, the opening ceremony was not only significant for Somta Tools and its customers, but is a boost for South African manufacturing which has been struggling to stay competitive. The quality and uniqueness of the tooling produced from this facility is winning contracts in Germany, Italy and other European countries. In the South African market, the company's tools are outperforming many of the leading international brands and creating the rare ability for users of this tooling to buy local whilst still improving their performance and productivity and reducing costs.

In this expansion, Somta Tools have not only quadrupled their capacity, but have created space for further growth in years to come. The expansion was funded in partnership with the IDC who were in attendance to officially open the facility.

More on the expansion



Richard McElligot, one of Somta's non-executive directors and Walter Mkhize, from the IDC cutting the ribbon to officially open Somta Tools' expanded carbide tooling facility



Since 1954, Somta's core business has been the manufacture of high quality HSS cutting tools. Now complemented with cutting edge expertise from its international research and development partners, who have decades of design and development experience in the solid carbide tooling industry, Somta is developing a number of innovative ranges, of high performance, leading edge, carbide cutting tools, to meet, and exceed international standards.

To achieve this, Somta has invested over R10 million this year alone on state-of-the art CNC equipment, which has seen the company quadruple its carbide tool manufacturing capacity thereby improving delivery times. Included in this investment is a Walter Helicheck Basic 3, for non-contact complete measurement of rotationally symmetrical precision tools with complex geometry, which significantly improves quality and inspection procedures as well as seven other machines with a further three to be added by the end of March.

To accommodate these new machines and allow space for further expansion, the carbide production facility has been extended from one hundred and thirty square meters, to four hundred and eighteen square meters. This expansion will allow for a dedicated test and training facility which includes the addition of a Haas VF-3YT CNC vertical machining centre, to test, run and enhance current and new tool designs, as well as for training purposes.

High performance product offering

To compete with and out-perform the best in the world, the company has used the best the world has to offer in carbide material, coatings and unique, patent pending geometries. Substantial research has been done to determine how various combinations of these three factors impact on a wide range of applications and material types, in order to deliver outstanding performance in each case.

This effort has resulted in a range of high performance tooling focussed on drilling and milling. Deserving special mention are the company's ranges designed for hard steel applications (tested up to 60 HRC) as well as Somta's new multipurpose

“Vari-Style” end mill – “VariCut”, both of which have new patent pending tool designs. The VariCut’s unique design uses a new core form and reinforced end geometry with unequal flute spacing which enables it to remove the most amount of material in the least amount of time with an excellent surface finish.

VariCut is available in corner chamfer or corner radius designs and a neck can be added according to customer request. It is effective in the widest range of materials including cast irons, carbon alloys, stainless steels, titanium and high temperature alloys. On stainless or titanium it will match or outperform any other four flute “Vari-style” end mill in the market, says Somta.

Other tools in the high performance range include four different roughing end mill ranges, tooling for aluminium as well as high performance drills, which are making substantial inroads into the performance demanding automotive industry.

Regrinds

As a critical component of the company’s service commitment, Somta offers a full regrind facility to enable its customers to get maximum life out of their tooling. The company says it excels over its competitors in this regard due to the following factors:

- The coating plant is part of the carbide facility and thus coating can be done overnight where urgent.
- Minimal cobalt leaching.



Included in the expansion is the installation of seven CNC machines with a further three to be added by the end of March

- Short lead times when compared with much tooling that has to be sent overseas for regrind and coating.
- Ability to guarantee regrind accuracy through its “Helicheck” optical measuring system – the only one of its kind in South Africa.

R&D Centre for customers benefit

Somta now offers its customers an additional value adding benefit – the ability to utilise the company’s state of the art R&D facility to find solutions to difficult machining applications or material types. Somta is able to simulate the production conditions so that their customers no longer have to break into critical production lines to conduct testing. Already, the company is partnering with several of its customers to find solutions to some of their machining challenges.

Somta has commenced with the running of regular open days in order to share this exciting development with its customers, and help

familiarise them with the company’s capabilities. Somta would like to extend an invitation to all their current and potential customers to make use of this opportunity and attend one of these days. A full factory tour of the high speed steel factory is followed by a carbide tour, and a demonstration of their new tools working in the R&D department.

To attend one of these days please contact your local sales representative or Somta’s Johannesburg sales office on TEL: 011 390 8700