

Somta Tools quadruples capacity at its Pietermaritzburg manufacturing plant

Expansion and enhancement of solid carbide tooling range part of strategy.

Somta Tools, one of the largest cutting tool manufacturers in the Southern Hemisphere, specialising in the design and manufacture of drills, reamers, milling cutters, toolbits, threading and custom tools, has spent over R10 million on new equipment this year that will see the company quadruple its carbide tooling manufacturing capacity.

"Last year, in association with our international design partners, we introduced two new innovative groupings of high performance carbide roughing and hard steel (up to 60HRC) finishing end mills to complement Somta's standard range of X.TREME coated solid carbide drills and standard end mills," said Allan Conolly, MD of Somta Tools. "The performance of these tools has been astounding – outperforming the best international brand but made right here in South Africa. So successful have the tools been that Somta has recently won some large contracts to supply this tooling to Germany!"

"We also offer a wide range of specialized, made-to-order tooling, to service our customers' specific requirements."

"It is our intention to expand our market share locally and internationally through improved manufacturing processes and the further introduction of new products," said Conolly. "If you are going to compete with the best in the world, you have to invest in the latest technology and equipment available."

"These new tools are well complemented by the introduction of the latest coating technology for carbide tooling in association with our Swiss partners Balzers. Having our coating and carbide plant all under one roof gives us the ability to offer a growing regrind and recoat service on our tools, extending tool life and offering quick turn around times," continued Conolly.

New production equipment

"We expanded our capabilities last year when we took delivery of a new ANCA TX7+ CNC grinding machine.



With the increased demand for product Somta Tools have now acquired an ANCA MX7 equipped with a 20kW motor and a robotic arm, to further increase production capacity and improve delivery times

The ANCA TX7+ allows for faster production of carbide end mills above 13mm diameter, due in part to the higher power 38kW motor, and enables Somta to offer quick turnaround on standard or special geometry solid carbide cutting tools."

"However, with the increased demand for our product we have now acquired an ANCA MX7 equipped with a 20kW motor and a robotic arm, to further increase

our production capacity and improve delivery times. The robotic arm has a very impressive loading time of 10 seconds."

"This installation took place in April this year. At the same time we took delivery of a Walter Helitronic Power with a 30kW motor. The machine is a universal tool grinding machine with 5 CNC controlled axes for production and regrinding of end mills, drills, step drills and step tools."

Improved quality and inspection

"To improve our quality and inspection on both new tool manufacture and in the regrind department, which we have been promoting vigorously, we also purchased a Walter Helicheck Basic 3. The Helicheck Basic is a 4-axis CNC measuring machine for non-contact complete measurement of rotationally symmetrical precision tools with complex geometry. With three measuring views, the Helicheck Basic replaces measuring equipment such as profile projectors and measuring microscopes and enables the company to provide certification for all tools manufactured or reground, where required. All regrinds are also coated with our Oerlikon Balzers X.TREME PVD surface coatings."

Further plans to increase capacity

"Whilst this major investment has enabled us to quadruple our production capacity, we do not intend to stop there. Currently we are expanding our carbide production facility from 130 m² to 418 m². This will enable us to create a dedicated test and training facility to test, run and improve our current and new tool designs, as well as for training purposes. One of the machines we are looking to purchase is a Haas VF-3YT CNC vertical machining centre."



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World class culture

“Through the acquisition of the latest technology, the introduction of innovative designs, and the relentless quest to develop great people within our organization, we are striving to build a world class culture and compete with the best on the planet.”

“This investment is part of that goal; another click in the flywheel that is starting to gain some momentum.”

Somta Tools was founded in 1954 by Samuel Osborn Ltd of Sheffield, England, through its subsidiaries Osborn Steels and Osborn Mushet Tools. The name Somta was chosen as the acronym for these companies

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operating in Africa. Somta expanded its activities in the 1980's through the acquisition of two cutting tool companies.

Somta continues to operate from its original site on Moses Mabhidia Road (formerly Edendale Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu Natal.

From humble beginnings in 1954 with 20 employees, Somta has grown into one of the largest cutting tool manufacturers in the southern hemisphere, operating from offices and modern manufacturing facilities laid out over three hectares with a complement of over 500 employees.

The factory manufactures 25 000 standard items and a further 6 000 made-to-order items to serve local markets and export markets in over 70 countries worldwide.

For further details contact Somta Tools Carbide Division on TEL: 011 390 8700 or visit www.somta.co.za



A general view of some of the machines involved in manufacturing the company's tooling