

Company: LASERCRAFT TECHNOLOGIES, INC.
Gainesville, Georgia
Laser: SpaceGear

Lasercraft Grows in All Dimensions with Mazak Lasers



In late 1996, Lasercraft founder Rodney Greene rented 3,000 square feet in the back of his father's fabricating shop and took delivery of his first laser, a Mazak 4x8, 1000 watt Champ. "I was a one-man band when I started out as a laser cutter, but after four months I had my first employee," said Greene, "after two years, I had moved into a 30,000 square foot facility in Gainesville, GA, expanding into welding and fabricating, with another 2D Mazak laser on the floor and 40 employees." His brother Jody, initially an investor in Lasercraft, came on full time in 1999 to handle the "business side of the business" freeing Rodney up to concentrate on the production, sales and service. While Lasercraft continued to grow, so did their competition as Atlanta saw a dramatic increase in the number of job shops entering into the laser cutting market.

With the ever expanding regional competition forcing margins lower, Greene knew he had to develop new markets in order to remain profitable. "When we started, I could count the competitors doing 2D laser cutting on one hand," Greene said. "Now there may be as many as 30 shops in the Metro Atlanta area.

We had upgraded to another higher wattage Mazak Laser because we do a lot stainless and aluminum and needed more cutting speed. You need the speed to compete, but we still have the Champ and we'll never sell it, we call it 'Our Little Cash Register'." It was with an eye on the competition and the desire to stay one step ahead that lead them to a Mazak Optonics open house in the spring of 2004.

"We went up there to see what's new, not intending to buy, maybe to replace our older 2,500 watt laser. Then we took a look at the SpaceGear and thought it could open up a niche in 3D work for us, while doubling our 2D capacity." Greene continued, "My brother and I went back to our hotel and really worked over the numbers. One way to go would have been to automate the 2D lasers with load /unload capability, but the SpaceGear gave us the ability to do something that no other shop in our area could. The beauty of the SpaceGear is that we have plenty of 2D work to move through it while we learn how to make money on 3D work." Although he had no 3D work scheduled for the SpaceGear, Greene did not panic. "I was

confident because I knew we could run the machine day and night with flat work.”

To sell their new 3D capability, Lasercraft employed an innovative marketing concept, “We would set up a ‘show job’ when an existing customer was coming in to look at another part,” Greene chuckled, “they would see these ‘jobs’ running and would get excited, then we would get an opportunity to quote on work that we weren’t being asked about before.”

Initially, most 3D work came in the form of converted traditional jobs, “We make a partition for the poultry business out of stainless steel schedule 40 pipe, cut to varying lengths, but all with

“We can get a premium rate for the 3D work versus 2D work and we can eliminate headaches.”

Rodney Greene, Founder, Lasercraft Technologies, Inc.

the same copes. We were sawing the pipe, then coping it on a mill. It would take 3-4 days to complete each partition. Now



we’re putting it on the SpaceGear and completing it in one shift. We’ve eliminated a step and reduced the coping time from 30 seconds per end to just 10. We were always behind on the order, now we’re on time.”

Another converted job was previously made at a CNC machine shop. “Used by power utilities, it’s a 4” O.D. aluminum tube with several holes, a profile notch on one end and a straight cut on the other. We were able to make it with a cost advantage vs. machining it. We just finished on our third production run.”

With experience and success on their side, Lasercraft began to target new customers and cultivate new relationships with existing customers. “We’ve been able to break into new cus-

tomers and into the engineering departments of current customers. Instead of quoting from a print, we are helping to design the part around the SpaceGear’s capabilities. It has strengthened our relationships with our customers. OEMs are trying to cut down the number of suppliers – the SpaceGear takes us out of the vendor category and makes us a strategic partner.”



Whether the project is in the concept stage or delivered in a solid model format, Greene has found that his customer’s are enjoying designing their parts around the SpaceGear. “They like putting things together like a puzzle, and when they design it for my machine, I can’t lose the work without them having to reengineer it.”

An example of this new level of involvement is a very large frame which was made from 12 pieces of 3” x 3” tubing. Lasercraft was able to reengineer it down to 2 pieces of 3” x 6” tubing by making cutouts on the SpaceGear that were not possible with the previous design. This also eliminated 30 minutes of welding time. “The engineers were ecstatic! The frame looked better with fewer welds, and we were able to make it faster for less money,” said Greene.

Since making the step into the 3D laser cutting arena, Lasercraft has been able to break out of the cut-throat pricing structure that has taken over the 2D market in the Atlanta area. “We can get a premium rate for the 3D work versus 2D work and we can eliminate headaches and bottle necks in production by getting parts to the welders faster, which cuts lead times and makes us more profitable.” As their 3D volume continues to grow, Greene is continuing to look to the future to keep his competitive edge, “We’re doing more and more tubing, as much as 50% of the work on the SpaceGear will be tubing by the end of the year. The ultimate goal is to move up to a Mazak FabriGear in the near future.”

**TALK TO THE EXPERTS. CALL 847-252-4500
TO LEARN MORE ABOUT 3D LASER TECHNOLOGY.**

www.mazakoptonics.com

Mazak
OPTONICS CORP.