

## Hydromat makes 24/7/365 more than slogan

Offers timely customer support over the Internet

**S**trip away the hype and there is a solid future for the Internet in supporting the needs of users of machine tools, whether small job shops or larger production houses.

I'm not talking about websites or their cousins—storefronts that deliver old, infrequently updated, or self-serving promotional and generally incomplete product information. It'll take more than that to make the 24/7/365 appellation a meaningful and useful description of the Internet in relation to metalworking users.

Bruno Schmitter, president and CEO of Hydromat Inc., St. Louis, MO, has asked more than once what a third-party Internet intermediary could offer to his customers that his company couldn't to keep their machines as productive as possible.

The company builds rotary, inline and trunnion transfer machines with a customer list that is highly-focused on medium- and high-production machining of precision parts.

Schmitter has come up with his company's Internet answer—one that extends parts, service and trouble-shooting support to Hydromat's customers—24/7/365.

Called HSLdirect, the storefront is an e-commerce solution that makes ordering parts fast, easy and entirely at the customer's convenience, day or night. Hydromat users simply visit Hydromat.com and click on the HSLdirect page link. Once there, all they have to do is type in the part description, choose the respective quantities, method of shipment

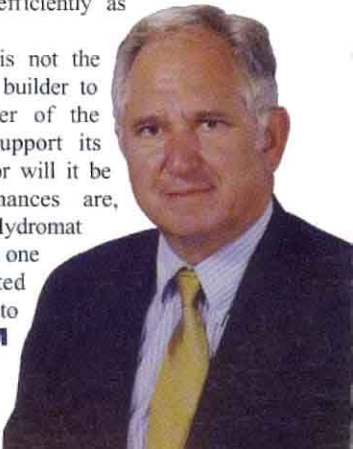
and payment, or even track previous orders, which are displayed.

A real and tougher question to answer was what to do about a Hydromat user who has a technical question any time day or night. Schmitter has an answer for that, too. Hydromat has launched a 24/7 Web-enabled, customer service paging system.

Harnessing the Internet to fulfill customer requirements for parts and service mirrors its own philosophy of quick turnaround in parts inventory. Eight Remstar automated storage and retrieval system units have been installed to streamline order picking for parts requests. And a collet manufacturing cell, which comprises a Studer CNC four-spindle precision internal grinder fed by an Erowa automated workflow material handling system, has been installed to reduce turnaround to 48 hours on collet orders.

The trick, as Hydromat has seen it, is to get these parts into the hands of its customers as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Hydromat is not the first machine builder to use the power of the Internet to support its customers. Nor will it be the last. Chances are, though, the Hydromat model will be one frequently cited as a good way to do it. **M**



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