

# State of the art is recipe for this market's future

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**T**he last word has not yet been written when it comes to mass production of precision parts. However, one fact has been established and widely adopted. If parts are to be competitively produced in North America, the processes of choice must be today's rotary transfer machines or multispindle lathes.

The government has not been of any help to manufacturers, and whatever existing trade policies do exist are not enforced. It is shop against shop, regardless of location, and only the fittest, leanest, technologically advanced will survive.

Domestic OEMs, however, prefer to buy these parts locally from a source

(just consider Toyota's best practices) and, possibly, national security.

Looking at the typical high-production shop these days in North America, the vintage of equipment is as old as American Airlines. Okay, these planes still fly, but at what cost? This is a company that has not made a dime in a long time, and one has to wonder how they are still in business?

New OEMs enter the marketplace and are looking for quality shops. This is a new breed of organization, bringing their technologies over from Europe and Japan, filling the void left by Delphi, Dana, Federal Mogul, and others. They are looking for quality shops they can partner with—but where to find them?

Bosch engineers from Germany called me recently. Their quest was to establish sources over here for screw machine work. Their claim set me back: They could not find enough quality sources here that were aggressively pursuing this opportunity—willing to partner and build a business relationship with Bosch. Hundreds of part numbers, therefore, remain sourced at a higher cost in Europe.

Production shops must make some tough choices on how to stay competitive and pay the bills while, hopefully, having something left over at year's end. Is it status quo, with outdated equipment and lots of labor hours wasted? Or something more refined and sophisticated? State of the art—in both advanced technology and part/component complexity—has got to be the recipe for a solid future for a domestic production operation. These are areas the Chinese cannot or do not want to touch.

Hydromat has engineered production machines for close to 30 years and understands the requirements of the marketplace. The EPIC Hydromat machine has been conceived from this wealth of experience and has been



Stopping to check on the progress of a rotary transfer machine in Hydromat's assembly area is the boss himself.

A rotary transfer machine covers the largest range of these precise parts since it can produce round symmetrical parts as well as asymmetrical blanks, forgings, and castings. Price pressure for precision parts is at an all-time high, and competition for these jobs is truly global.

they can manage, visit, and talk to. It is a nightmare for a plant manager to open up box after box and find a new surprise in every one of them. How is he able to build quality assemblies under such conditions? A solid supply chain is crucial for a successful OEM—for flexibility, quality, and employment





**Schmitter looks over an EPIC rotary transfer machine.**

engineered to compete in this tough marketplace. As on the legacy Hydromat machines, the part is clamped either in a collet or a chuck and machined completely in seconds, depending on the material and part size.

Having the choice between 12 and 16 stations gives the process engineer the ability to layout the machining sequence ideally both for cycle time and process stability. Tooling becomes simple and inexpensive, and the productivity will range from 85 percent to 95 percent. The notion that today's Hydromats are solely for dedicated setups is simply incorrect.

**'The time is right for change now'.**

The EPIC design offers unprecedented flexibility at every station with simple programming and quick-change tooling. Changeover can be accomplished literally by a single keystroke among families of part numbers. Spindle speeds up to 40,000rpm and high-pressure coolant through the tool tip shave seconds over conventional processes.

A Hydromat will always be a Hydromat with a solid corporate backup, but a 1980 vintage is not up to par with today's technology. To reach the ultimate productivity, today's machines need to be put to use to be able to gain that competitive advantage.

It might take a generation of management change to breathe these new ideas and philosophies into a once-successful operation—one living off past glory—to become a successful world-class competitor today.

And it has to start at the top and work its way through the ranks in an organization. There must be a

desire to win this contract and make the investment, both in people and equipment. Train your associates well for their practical skills, but do not stop there. All of them need to be thinking as stakeholders and salespeople. Choose the right process and machine for the job to be able to nail the cycle time. But it cannot stop there, either. Perfect the tooling on a daily basis and count the

pieces in the baskets at the end of the day. The count ought to be trending up.

The time is right for change now—that part buyer is ready for you if you arrive with a new tool in the offering and an aggressive mindset. Today's buyers want to work with you. After all, it makes their jobs so much easier.

**Hydromat Inc., [www.rsleads.com/605tp-172](http://www.rsleads.com/605tp-172)**