

High-quality corners

An ACF Multiflex MF 100 corner former supplied by Shear-Form Machine Tools Ltd, Coventry (Tel: 024 7669 5600), has proved to be very successful – both in terms of production and its influence on product design – for Dudley Industries Ltd. Based in Lytham St Anne's, with 180 employees and a turnover of £15 million, the latter makes around 150 different products from stainless steel, mild steel, aluminium and plastic.

Flexible in both design and production, Dudley can undertake small or medium production runs of specially designed products to meet the needs of individual customers. Production manager Ian McFarlane says: "I am always looking for new technologies and processes to improve our production. We pride ourselves on the ability to talk to our customers and create new product design proposals that satisfy their requirements, with short lead times and high levels of flexibility.

"I first noticed the ACF corner former in an industrial journal, and when I contacted Shear-Form, I was only thinking of one product on which it could be used; this involved a lot of hand welding and dressing to produce corners with the required design finish. I saw the machine as an opportunity to introduce cost savings, reduce lead times and improve quality through consistency."

When Shear-Form sales engineer Francois Meillet visited Dudley with samples of finished corners, Mr McFarlane saw immediately that the corner former would eliminate the cost of welding and the variability in the skill of the operator. "We decided to build the machine's capabilities into our customers' design requirements for rounded corners with different radiuses. Soon, we had a customer



who wanted a product that we could make much more cheaply if we went ahead and purchased a corner former. The customer wanted a 100mm radius, so we purchased the MF100, knowing that this also gave us the capability to produce smaller radii. Our requirement went down to 10mm, but the MF100 can actually produce corners with a radius of 2mm, so it was well within our specifications.

"We know from our production forecasts that the pay-back period is well under two years. We also know that it has made us even more flexible than we were, giving us more options when designing new products." Dudley has actually re-designed two existing products to take advantage of the new machine's capabilities, and the corners being produced are just what the customer was looking for.

The MF100 is the largest of three corner formers produced by ACF Engineering & Automation in Austria. They are able to form corners on a wide range of products, including electrical-cabinet doors, computer casings, trays, lids, oven doors, bathroom accessories, furniture, cladding and signs. The MF100 can form four closed corners on a zinc-coated mild-steel panel in 52sec. All models have universal tooling, to give the operator maximum flexibility

