VIOLLET INDUSTRIES

THE RIGHT SOLUTION FOR EVERY SINGLE REQUEST

Metal cages, or, more generally, the structures for the collection or storage of products (parts or semi-finished pieces) are commonly found in companies in every sector. Normally they are “invisible” objects, in the sense that they are approached only to look at their contents, but in reality they are themselves industrial products whose design and creation require specific know-how. We learned this from Céline Hugot who, together with her brother Sylvain Chaumprenot, is the owner of Viollet Industries, a French family company that has developed most of its business on this very structure.
The company was founded in 1990 in Alby-su-Chéran, near Annecy, by Céline and Sylvain’s parents who transferred the reins to their son and daughter in 2001. In 2002, a second production facility was opened in Romania where the bulk of the production workforce is located today, totaling about 120 people.

Céline, who is also in charge of communications, describes the business as follows: "*We design and manufacture metal containment structures, racks (or trolleys if they have wheels), and more generally machined, welded and painted mechanical components for leading companies in various sectors.*" The company is certified and among its clients it can boast illustrious brands in various sectors such as Manitou in agricultural machinery, PSA, Renault and Daimler in the automotive world, Bombardier Transports and many others in the shopfitting sector or in metal structures, but also trains and nuclear (Uranium transport).

Flexibility is a must

Containers are specific to each customer and different depending on the type of parts they need to hold, as Céline explains. "*Every time the customer makes a new type of part they need a new type of container and our work is based on the ability to do design and manufacturing very quickly. It's never very large batches, it used to be with automotive you'd get up to 1000 pieces per batch, now it's 200-300 pieces at most.*" Part of the production is dedicated to machine tools, for German and Swiss customers. "*We have all stages of processing from cutting to MIG, MAG and TIG welding, robotic or manual, and also painting. We design and make safety covers for retrofitting old machines, but also all the metal parts of a new machine. The structure in Romania where we specialize in machining heavy metal, up to 50 mm thick with plasma and oxyfuel, and the shell in France where we laser cut thin metal up to 10 mm thick,*" explains Céline who concludes, "*So you need to be extremely flexible at all stages, from CAD design to production scheduling to actual production, and that's why we need flexible machines.*"

The right machine at the right time

"*We are a small company and with my brother we take on requests from start to finish and the customer always has one of us as a single point of contact, who can make decisions quickly and speed up the process. That's why we are able to offer a very fast and efficient service.*" Céline continues, "*Companies come to us with a problem asking for a solution. It's discussed, decided and at that point we have to be very quick to implement and for that we have to be able to do everything in-house without having to depend on others. We do the design and implement it.*
In 2008, we had purchased a laser system for sheet metal. It was very old, it was fine for us, but when we started running out of parts we had to look around. Over three years ago we saw the LC5 combined laser cutting system for tube and sheet metal and it immediately went on the list of favorites, but it was too expensive at the time and we weren't ready to put that much money into a machine that was only for internal use that wouldn't have a way to work three shifts. Last year we felt ready to buy it and a very interesting proposal came from BLM GROUP and we agreed. It was the right time, we had time to train people and now that the market is exploding we are ready and we are using the machine at 120% of its capacity."

A "user friendly" system

The people who had to use the system were not used to being stationary for hours in front of a computer as they had to do for the BLM training course where they learned the essential principles of tube cutting and the use of CAD CAM, however; at the end of the installation, the ADIGE-SYS technician gave the practical course on board the machine where everything was solved very simply and it was not difficult to learn.

Save at least

30% of time

Céline tells us an anecdote about this, “*The person who was mainly supposed to work on the system is retiring next year and, worried, asked to postpone this, or at least to train someone else on this new machine right away, but he actually learned very quickly and is now working without difficulty. It seems to be a really user friendly system.*”

A new way to produce

Viollet Industries uses a lot of rectangular tube that first had to be drilled, on the drill, one hole at a time. This was a very long, expensive process with great risk of human error due to the repetitiveness of the operation. Now they use the joint libraries of Artube CAD CAM to make the stable connections between tubes and in this way avoid errors during assembly and save on welding jigs. “*The precision of the machining allows us to produce without wasting time and with great accuracy. Assembling a structure resembles a LEGO build. It’s so fast now! We feel like kids in a toy store,*” reports Céline enthusiastically. The machine has been running for about 9 months and production is 50% tube and 50% sheet metal. “*In general I don’t really like combination machines because while one part is working the other is standing still and it seems wasteful, but with our volumes this is really the perfect product. A Lasertube would have been too expensive for us and excessive for our current needs. With the combo, we have the flexibility and this is a good mix for our type of production,*” explains further Céline.

It is not possible to make a comparison between before and after to quantify the advantage gained by purchasing the LC5, firstly because the parts are always different and do not lend themselves to comparison, and secondly because it is the way of working that has completely changed as a whole. “*For us, the cutting time is not a particularly important parameter, the flexibility of the system is much more important, the process as a whole counts, and it’s just not possible to compare the manual work of before with the current situation. The production method has really changed. When you drill by hand, you first have to cut the part on another machine, now this is all done in one step. Before, we had to make the welding jigs, which means designing and producing them, and only then could we make the products. Now we launch the parts into production and assemble them, the time is not comparable and we save at least 30% of the time. Even our regular customers have seen an advantage because they see the difference in lead times.*”