

Platino Laser Opens Door to New Markets

Carmeco Inc., Lebanon, MO, was founded by Kenneth Carr in 1970 as a 6,000-square-foot company with a few stamping presses. From its modest beginning, Carmeco has evolved into a thriving contract manufacturer with 80,000 square feet of manufacturing space over two buildings. Today, Kenneth's son Jeff is president of the company and his three grandsons John, Jared, and Joe are all active in the company.

Carmeco's customer base includes OEMs across industry including trucking, housing, agriculture, recreation, etc. The company has a total of 21 stamping presses with the largest being 400 tons. The press brakes have the capacity up to 110 tons. The company also has a full line of secondary operations, with TIG, MIG, and spot welding as well as painting services.

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Platino 2D Laser

The Prima Power Platino is equipped with lasers developed and produced at Prima Electro with laser powers ranging from 3kW to 5kW. The laser cuts a broad range of materials and thicknesses with speed and precision without the need for manual adjustments. Platino's



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laser cutting head gives users a choice of a 10-inch focal length in addition to the standard 5-inch and 7.5-inch lenses. The 10-inch lens enhances the application flexibility by increasing the depth of focus and enlarging the spot diameter for high and uniform cut quality of thick stainless (5/8 in), thick aluminum (1/2 in) and thick mild steel (1 in).

Offering a compact footprint along with a Cartesian Cantilever structure that provides three-sided access, Platino is a cost-effective machine that is easy to operate and quick to program. Its unique stonecast frame reduces vibration and increases stiffness by about 4 times compared to cast iron and about 6 times compared to welded frames. Its low heat conductivity results in much higher thermal stability compared to traditional cast or steel frames.

Changing Market

For the past several years, Carmeco's customer needs have been changing. “Today, we do an increasing amount of complete manufacturing from raw material to welding, painting, assembly, and shipping to end user,” explains John Carr, vice president of business development. “This led us more and more to the laser. We see an increasing amount of assembly work and smaller-piece runs where stamping is not the most efficient method. In addition, customers often want to change designs or add or eliminate holes. We can achieve these changes more quickly with the laser. We were outsourcing all of our laser work and our lead times were getting



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longer and longer. To meet our customers' demands, we began our search to purchase a laser of our own."

According to Carr, Carmeco spent several years researching the latest laser technology and talking to numerous laser builders. "We did our homework," says Carr. "We visited several laser companies, talked to a number of laser users, and went to FABTECH to see all the machines in action. The reason that we chose the Platino CO2 laser is that it gave us the greatest flexibility and covered the biggest spectrum."

Carmeco chose the Prima Power Platino because of the following features:

- the cantilever arm
- user-friendly software
- one-piece stonecast construction
- Flexible Automation – Prima Power's Compact 10-shelf TowerServer

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The TowerServer allows easy loading/unloading for blanks and processed sheets. It has an elevator for loading and unloading the pallets on and off the tower, and features single sheet separating, control systems, and sheet reference.

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Learning the Laser

Since the Platino was Carmeco's first laser, there was a little learning curve when the Platino first arrived. "When the Platino was first installed, it wasn't very busy," reflects Carr. "But all that changed once we felt comfortable with the new technology." Carmeco has 48 employees that work 10-hour shifts, four days per week. Initially, the Platino ran 10-hour shifts per day, but now is running lights out 18 hours per day.

"The Platino with the 10-shelf TowerServer has helped us tremendously by increasing our flexibility," says Carr. "Previously, we might have been one or two weeks out before we could get a rush job in the production schedule. Today, if we have to jump in and laser cut something with the tower we can swap from 12 gauge to 1/4" in a few minutes, burn out something quickly, and then jump back to the job we were running."



Prima Power's Compact 10-shelf TowerServer allows easy loading/unloading for blanks and processed sheets. It has an elevator for loading and unloading the pallets on and off the tower, and features single sheet separating, control systems, and sheet reference.

Opening New Markets

"The Platino has opened the door to new business, and we've added new customers because of the laser. We can now do smaller runs with ease. In fact, we've taken some shorter run jobs off the presses and on to the Platino. The Platino has also opened new opportunities with existing customers. We can now get involved in the design stage with building prototypes for our customers."

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Quality of the edge is very important for Carmeco products. "Before purchasing the Platino, we made one large 14-gauge part we had to ship to an outside vendor to have plasma cut," explains Carr. "Then we had to grind the edges so we could make a good weld. With the Platino, we no longer have to grind the edges of the part and we have been able to save an hour's labor on that product alone."

The Platino has also replaced most of the shearing at Carmeco. "Our shear has cobwebs all over it now," jokes Carr. "Using the laser is so much easier and faster. Some of the shearing work was 1/4" and our employees would have to drag 60 x 120 sheets of 1/4" around that weighs 400 lbs. The Platino has eliminated that physical labor. The tower does that work and it doesn't even sweat or grunt."

"We've had a very good experience with Prima Power," concludes Carr. "The Platino has been easy to learn, operate, and maintain. The Prima Power salesman and service techs have been great and very helpful. Another Prima Power would be our choice in the future for our next machine."