

Series volume: only 15 parts!

How can the versatility of the DECO be used to a competitive advantage ?

With this somewhat provocative title, the editorial team of DECO magazine decided to introduce Bandi SA, from Courtételle in French-speaking Switzerland. Attracted by the company's reputation for quality and extreme versatility, DECO magazine wanted to know more.

Our editor and Mr. Kurt Schnider, head of sales for Switzerland went to the Swiss Jura.



From left to right Messrs Kurt Schnider, Yves Bandi, General Manager and Jean-Jacques Bandi, Board Director.

Established in 1970, the company first started producing polished parts for the watch industry. From 1980 onwards, small parts turning work gradually started to replace polishing. The company now employs 38 people and has a fleet of seventy automatic lathes, including 34 DECO machines.

Bandi SA is located in an industrial estate and what immediately struck our journalist was the high level of security surrounding the company, with its surveillance cameras positioned everywhere and its electronically controlled entrance gate...

Are there any secrets that have to be safeguarded in this enclosed area? We'll soon find out ...

DM: Good day Mr. Bandi. Thank you for agreeing to meet us. We've just come across your surveillance system, which seems to be highly sophisticated. Is this to protect your know-how ?

Y.B.: Hello Gentlemen! (Smiling) No, we're not protecting our know-how but because we work a lot with luxury watch industry and jewellery, we have to machine very

high quality materials, which require a high level of security.

DM: Thanks Mr. Bandi. The main subject that brings us here is the company's flexibility. This is something you seem to be most efficient in. We'd like to find out a little more about the versatility you seem to portray. Could you perhaps tell us, for example, the number of start-ups you carry out each month ?

Y.B.: As indicated at the outset, we are very active in luxury small parts turning for the top-of-the range

watch industry sector. This makes us subject to two main constraints: firstly, the quality of parts executed in terms of tolerance and surface finish and, secondly, lead times. It is not unusual to have to produce small series runs for the day after receiving the order. This is why we have to be very flexible.

To give you some figures, we carry out 200 start-ups on average per month on our DECO machines.

DM: *200 start-ups a month on 34 DECO machines – this means roughly 6 start-ups per DECO machine a month... and what about your other machines?*

Y.B.: We also have TORNOS ENC162 and 164, and the ENC74 machines, which we use for larger series runs. The programming and operating systems of these older machines no way come near to the versatility provided by the DECO machines.

DM: *For your DECO machines, what is the average series run?*

Y.B.: We execute average series runs of 500 parts but what often happens is that we also have to execute series runs for 2 to 15 parts. (The telephone rang during the interview and an order was placed for 4 individual parts).



An operator in front of the tool storage system.

DM: *This is incredible – what do you do to achieve such versatility? We're sometimes told that the DECO machines are not really adapted for small series runs,*

but you are blatantly contradicting this – what's your secret?

Y.B.: The whole company is geared towards this versatility – this is a fast and personal response to our clients. We derive the maximum benefit from the DECO concept. We program in hidden time, we pre-set in hidden time and starting-up takes us on average, between 1 and 3 hours. The computerised management of all data relating to the parts means that we save a lot of time. The programs and information relating to the 5000 parts we have just produced are instantaneously available in our database. With respect to any new part, we often proceed on the basis of an existing part that has already been optimised and we execute the necessary changes. The TB-DECO has been upgraded but compatibility is maintained. This is a fantastic advantage.



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DM: *But do the staff manage to follow this rhythm? What about training?*

Y.B.: All our staff were initially trained at Moutier and then within the company. We do not have machine-dedicated operators – they are versatile and have a wide range of skills. They go from one shop to another depending on requirements and are able to perform miracles with the machines. We have several mobile programming stations in each workshop and the men can simply use these as required. We operate a three-shift system 6 days out of 7 and the average age of the workforce is around 30 years. All our operators are “immersed” in the DECO machines and share their know-how – they really are a high-performance team, who help each other out as required.

DM: *Such versatility is absolutely fantastic, but how do you manage logistic flows in terms of tooling and material? This must be quite complicated.*

Y.B.: Our company does not have a “wardrobe”! All our materials and tooling are stored in gigantic hinged storage racks that are electronically controlled. Everything is controlled by the “GPAO” system and we always know exactly what is available and what is not.

D.M.: *Fine, but if you have to react quickly, I presume your materials and tooling stock must be consistent...*

Y.B.: The parts we produce are normally between 0.8 mm and 5 to 6 mm diameter ... and we have 20 tonnes of materials in store... this is, therefore, quite consistent.

DM: *Apart from pure production, do you offer any other services?*

Y.B.: Our entire philosophy is geared towards top-of-the-range “perfect” parts. We also have all the facilities required to meet the most stringent of demands. For example, the polishing division helps us achieve visually perfect parts,

which is extremely important for horology. We carry out very strict controls. Each produced part is inspected by one of our operators. We also have 3D inspection devices so that we can guarantee the quality of our work. We also have a perfect system of parts tracing and inspection reports.

This is also a service that is sometimes requested. Regarding the packaging, we pack according to requirement, for example, individual packs, vacuum packs and so on...

DM: *Apart from watch industry, do you work for other sectors?*

Y.B.: Watch industry represents 70 % of our sales and the remaining 30 % is assigned to electronics and sub-contracting. But always top-of-the-range. Our parts are quality parts. For example, we are heavily involved in the luxury telephone sector.



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DM: *Still on the subject of "luxury", how to you secure your services with your clients? In other words, what do they require? What do you have to do to keep them?*

Y.B.: In fact, quality and lead-time requirements are of great importance, like everywhere else, but we also comply with process and security requirements. This is not a life-long guarantee but non-the-less means that our skills and performance are acknowledged. If necessary, the manufacturers have recourse to their approved suppliers, with our company being one of them.

DM: *If I were to say that you are a jeweller in high precision turning?*

Y.B.: You could say that, especially as we are frequently asked to produce one-off parts for top-of-the-range watch repairs. In this sense, we are the direct partners of the jewellers.

DM: *To summarise, I would say that one of your strengths really resides in your ability to react. In this context, do you have any anecdote you may like to mention to illustrate this point?*

Y.B.: (After long reflection) It's very difficult to give you an answer because this happens all the time... but I'll tell you about when one of our clients, who was at the Basle trade fair, phoned me at 14.00 hours to order a part... At 17.00 hours, the part was on the booth,

assembled and ready to be displayed. We really are partners with our customers and the versatility of the DECO really helps us to provide customer satisfaction.

DM: *We noticed that everything was air-conditioned. Is that a compulsory requirement?*

Y.B.: In our case, precision is something that is vital and has to be complied with. Air-conditioning is also a very important benefit for the repetitivity of our process. In an environment where versatility is critical, as it is here, this is something that contributes to one of our main strengths.

DM: *To come back to what we were talking about at the beginning of this article, we referred*

to the size of your series runs, as well as to protection and secrecy. Finally, is that not something you protect the most?

Y.B.: As already indicated, the security measures are obviously dedicated to the precious materials, but the image is, in fact, quite good. Our secret is based on our skills – the "man-machine" combination means that we can maintain a good position in the market. Our staff are very competent and also very responsible and I would like to thank them for this. The DECO machines have extraordinary cycle times and our operators exploit their working capacities to a maximum in hidden time – they know the machines inside out ... this allows us to offer top-quality services.

DM: *Thank you Mr. Bandi. Do you have any particular comments about the title of this article "Series volume: only 15 parts!" that you would like me to add?*

Y.B.: Yes, I believe that many small parts turning companies have different goals but the DECO really lets you tackle everything. As far as I'm concerned, it's a pity that the DECO machines are only used for large series runs, especially as its such a powerful system...



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