A SUITABLE INVESTMENT IS NOT AN EXPENSE

To offer users the most suitable automation solution, HURCO collaborates with various partner companies—RoboJob being one of them. How such solutions are implemented within the network is evident at Schley Maschinenbau, where a 5-axis VC 500 i is loaded with a Mill-Assist system.

In Wesseling, just south of Cologne, machines have been running at full capacity for some time now. With around 50 operating hours per week and 120% utilization, Schley regularly operates at its limits. Thanks to the automated VC 500 i from HURCO, the operations manager can now run additional parts or small batches after a standard shift—without having to build up excess capacity. Most of the time, this concerns unpopular parts or batch sizes.

This not only frees up our team from repetitive tasks," explains Josef Schley, "but also assigns jobs that are prone to error due to their monotony to a precise handling system. We load the robot with anywhere between 10 and 80 parts, which the machine then processes

independently. In the meantime, the operator can focus on their skilled work."

Thanks to automation, the machine can now run for an additional 20 to 40 hours per week on top of the regular 50.

Striving for the Best Possible Outcome

The path Schley has taken with his company was demanding. It all began in a garage workshop, where manual tools were used for repairs. After acquiring more equipment—particularly the first machining center—the business gradually evolved from a repair and maintenance service to a successful contract manufacturer. "Especially since my son decided to join the company seven years ago," Schley emphasizes.

Today, Schley Maschinenbau is a tight-knit team of 13 employees, all committed to delivering top quality.

"We aim to deliver the best possible results. That mindset and good work have brought us to where we are today."

Rooted in Precision

Schley manufactures complex precision parts, ranging in size from cigarette packs to shoeboxes, typically from tool steel 1.2379. The parts are milled with allowance for grinding, then hardened, ground, and wire-eroded.

Six HURCO machines are available for milling tasks, including:

1× VC 500 i (5-axis swivel table)

2× VMX 24 i

1× VMX 24 HSi

1× VMX 30 Ui

1× VMX 30 i

“We generally achieve tolerances below 0.05 mm. During grinding, we approach micron-level accuracy. Consequently, we don’t produce €20 or €40 parts—our parts often cost €200 to €800 each.”
These durable parts are primarily delivered to general mechanical engineering but are also used in diesel engines and refinery systems. Despite this specialization, Schley remains true to his roots in repair and maintenance services for various industries.

A Valuable Integration

“Our trust in HURCO stems from years of positive experience,” Schley says about his milling operations.
“Everything builds on one another: the control system, the machine, even the logic behind the programs develops step by step. This means our team can immediately get up to speed on any new machine. The combination of machining center and intuitive control is worth its weight in gold.”
He also highlights the dual-screen simulation and dialog interface as real advantages.
“For us, the price-performance ratio is outstanding.”

Flexibility Drives Utilization

Another success factor is the flexibility of both machine and control system, which has enabled Schley to take on larger production

volumes.

“Whereas we used to focus on individual parts and series of up to 20, we now handle batches of 50 or 80 units—and that’s what drives our high machine utilization.”
Which brings the story back to automation:
“We had been interested in the Mill-Assist for some time,” Schley explains.
“We looked at similar solutions from two competitors. After deciding in favor of the robot solution, we specifically purchased the VC 500 i for it.”
Thanks to its corner-opening cabin doors, the machine is ideal for automated part handling.

A Problem? Not Really.

Today, Schley achieves a balance by running two systems in parallel: during the day, the operator produces one-off parts, while the machine independently processes series afterwards. “We did have one modification request,” the manager recalls. Initially, CNC program changes made on the HURCO machine were not passed on to the robot.
“Now the interface works flawlessly, and every change is adopted immediately. In the end, it wasn’t a big issue. A technician came by, made the adjustment, and it worked right away. We also received training, and since then, everything has run smoothly.”

A Smart Investment

“HURCO’s application support and telephone consulting are incredibly efficient,” Schley sums up.
Calls to the hotline are sorted by topic, ensuring that the right person calls back within two hours—usually resolving the issue right away.
“The 5-axis machining center with robotic loading was a major investment for us, and it has definitely paid off. Of course, you need good employees. You can’t just take any old program and let the robot run. You need to familiarize yourself with it. But I’m thrilled—it works very well.
One thing is clear:
The investment was worth it.”

www.schley-maschinenbau.de

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