Software helps metal fabricating shop foster process innovations, efficiency

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Situation

FosterWorks, a women-owned sheet metal fabricating shop on the north side of Chicago, employs five people on its shop floor and three people in the office. Though small, the company has invested in one Mitsubishi laser, two Strippit CNC turret punches, numerous press brakes, welding equipment, hardware insertion machines, and rolling and shearing machines. For operations that fall outside of those capabilities, such as stamping, machining, spinning, and finishing, owners Liz Kloster and Lucy Minturn turn to a network of shops in the Chicago area that help them fulfill customer orders, and they return the favor often.



Operations Manager James Crannell sets up the Strippit.

When they first purchased the business, its focus was primarily precision components for the lighting industry. While FosterWorks is still a highly regarded supplier to that marketplace, Kloster and Minturn have added clients in the oil and gas, food service, home appliance, and aerospace industries. The shop performs everything from prototyping through full production using a variety of materials and methods.