**Di-Spark invests in high speed 5-axis technology**

DI-SPARK Group has acquired its fifth 5-axis machining centre from GF AgieCharmilles. The new machine, a Mikron HSM 400U, was installed at the company’s Portsmouth factory at the end of February, and is being used to machine high-precision, complex parts predominantly for the aerospace sector. Di-Spark also purchased 15 days applications support (in addition to training) from GF AgieCharmilles ‘to ensure that we were able to get the most and the best from the machine as quickly as possible’ says managing director David Light.

The decision reflects the company’s continuous improvement-led business approach, but was accelerated by a specific aerospace job. The part, an aluminium impeller used in an aircraft fuel pump assembly, was characterised by its high accuracy, demanding surface finish requirement and thin, contoured blades. ‘The impeller was a true simultaneous 5-axis part; we knew that attempting to manufacture it by low speed 5-axis (3 + 2) machining would be pointless from a commercial perspective and not capable of delivering the required product quality’ explains Light.

The HSM 400U purchase also reflects the changing nature of Di-Spark’s business. ‘Our reputation, growth and success have always been built on our ability to deliver sophisticated manufacturing solutions to customers using advanced machining technologies’ says David Light. ‘In the not so distant past, it was advanced EDM technology (wire and sink) that drove our business forward, and the EDM-machined solutions we delivered accounted for 80% of our turnover. Today, whilst EDM is still critically important to us, we now derive a significant proportion of our business (45% - 50%) from our other CNC machining technologies and capabilities, with milling (and in particular 5-axis milling) being the most important of these.’

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