



Jonda steps up the game with new Up-and-Down-Folder

Jonda Sheetmetal is a lucky case of an Australian manufacturing business inundated with too much work! Its latest acquisition – a state-of-the-art folding equipment from Variobend – is helping the company get on top of its strong demand.

Based in Heidelberg West, Victoria, Jonda was founded some 30 years ago by John Nikolopoulos and his wife Dani. The company currently offers a wide range of sheet metal products as well as general manufacturing services such as CNC punching, profile cutting, folding and guillotining. Its main specialties are the manufacture and supply of roofing products and rainwater goods.

“We started off making box gutter brackets, and then we went to flashings and all sort of sheet-metal goods, and we’re still doing the same today,” says Nikolopoulos, now Jonda’s Managing Director. “We’re still making the brackets we started off with years ago. We’ve got a good product.”

Perhaps these brackets are too good - judging by the increasing level of demand for them. While some Australian manufacturers struggle to keep their businesses going, Jonda faces difficulty keeping up with the high demand and fulfilling orders on time. As Jonda’s supervisor Harry Gurlu puts it: “We’re too busy at the moment. That’s the problem.”

While a nice problem to have, it needs swift addressing. Jonda recently invested in a new Variobend DB8. 1,50 Up-and-Down folding machine, by the German company ASCO, one of the leading manufacturers of long folding machines in the world. Nikolopoulos initially saw the machine online and was immediately struck by its speed in comparison to other similar equipment on the market. Since the machine’s arrival in Jonda’s workshop it already made quite an impact.

“It’s increased productivity by a lot,” says Gurlu. “Before, we were getting about 22 or 23 pieces an hour, now we can get to about 67, at the last count. We’re eventually going to be able to cut overtime down dramatically. We used to work from 6am to 8pm. We’ve reduced that and we’ll reduce it even more, stop Saturdays and all that. Hopefully the machine will pay itself off in a year or so.”

“The new machine is definitely helping us keep up with demand,” adds Nikolopoulos. “It’s very fast; probably one of the fastest machines on the market at the moment; and the hydraulics are far superior to comparable competitors. It saves a lot of time, plus the way it folds up and down means the boys don’t have to spin the jobs around. It’s all computerised with drawings on the screen.

“I basically sold all my old machinery – the last one went about two weeks ago finally after 20 or 30 years. They’re all gone and this is the new way of doing things now.”

Speed meets efficiency

Variobend’s superior speed is immediately apparent when seen in action. To demonstrate its impressive performance, a metal sheet was folded in Jonda’s workshop to produce a flashing. Each fold took less than three seconds and was performed to extremely high precision. No handling by an operator was required as the process of manipulating and positioning the metal is fully automated.

The Variobend folding machine delivers efficiency savings in more ways than just speed. The machine only requires a single operator, the system’s user-friendly design simplifies back-up staff training considerably, and the innovative operating system reduces machine downtime even further.

Programming of the machine by Jonda can be done offline without interference/interruption of ongoing production. Customers send in their jobs via email or by SMS; the required panels often drawn only in rough sketches. The machines’ software converts these pictures into a running program. A full job folder for that specific customer is then sent to the Variobend, where the operator opens up that directory and selects the requested panels. The operator is therefore continuously folding without the need for time-consuming reprogramming of the machine.

The Variobend operating system runs on open-source software and can therefore be used by the customers themselves. They can directly input their drawings into the system remote – even from an actual roof where a specific flashing or gutter is required – streamlining and speeding up the process further!

“We also have a system where you can draw the sketch on a piece of paper, with all the angles and the lengths written in, scan this in, and the moment it’s scanned into the program is written,” says Peter Staebner, Managing Director of Stamac. “You don’t have to do anything! This means we are lowering the required skill levels to make these products in twice the speed of our opposition and with much reduced waste/rejects.”

The Jonda team is so excited about the new Variobend that they shifted their old folding machine aside to make room for a second Variobend, which is scheduled to be delivered imminently.

“The second machine got purchased within the space of six months” said Staebner. “We are looking at an \$500,000-plus investment – spending that much money in such a short timeframe must mean the product is really, really good! Reducing overtime and its associated cost as well as increasing productivity means speedy repayment of the purchase and increasing profits for the customer.”