



SOLUTIONS BEYOND MACHINES

Interview with Bill Heller (Messer Cutting Systems)

Menomonee Falls, USA, 2022.07.26

Messer Cutting Systems, a global provider of technology for the metalworking industry, has recently presented itself with a new slogan, "Creating Solutions Beyond Machines". But what is behind it? Bill Heller, Global Product Manager, explains it in an interview as well as why this is not only a slogan but important for the whole industry.

Bill, for over 120 years, Messer Cutting Systems provided products and services for the metal processing industry. You know the market for more than four decades, working as CEO of Messer Cutting Systems Americas in recent years. What are the most significant changes in this industry?

Bill Heller: In my forty plus years in this Industry the last five have shown the greatest shift in customer expectations. Part of this shift comes from the rapid development of laser technology which has revolutionized the cutting industry. It is quickly becoming the replacement to plasma applications with advantages in cut quality, speed, part accuracy and clean up.

But there are other contributors that I believe have even greater importance to this shift:

- + The need to digitize production
- + The lack of qualified workers.
- + The efforts of our customers to continuously reduce their costs.

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Which of these topics does the shoe pinch the most?

Bill Heller: Conversations I have had with customers in recent years have been more focused around these contributors as the primary discussion point. Yes, the machines were discussed but more and more Messer is being asked to help solve the business challenges around the cutting machine that are impacting greatly the machines efficiency and in turn overall cost of operation and parts being produced.

The cutting cycle done by the machine is just one part of the total processing time and cost of a cut part.

What other significant influencers do you see?

Bill Heller: Together with our customers, we identified a number of process obstacles and cost adders related to producing the final cut part not done by the machine.

These are few examples:

- + finding material to cut for the next cutting job,
- + loading material onto the cutting table,
- + availability of cranes to load and unload material from cutting table,
- + unloading cut parts and scrap from the cutting table,
- + cleaning and sorting parts after cutting,
- + availability of detailed information of machine uptime and reliability,
- + planning and scheduling the cutting jobs for need and best efficiency,
- + human resource availability to perform these tasks.

How serious is the situation? What can be improved?

Bill Heller: Some of our customers report that the machines only cut 20-30% of the time because of these “other factors”. Conversely, this means that the machine stands still 70 percent of the time and generates costs instead of margins! It is therefore of vital importance to not just improving cutting performance, but to also reducing process obstacles.



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What does that have to do with the new slogan of Messer Cutting Systems?

Bill Heller: As a global provider for the metal-working industry we offer proven cutting systems, flexible service packages, intelligent software solutions and customised services that go beyond the mere machine already for quite a long time. This is nothing new. But now our goal is to gain higher overall efficiency for our customers and increase customer value. This is summed up in “Creating Solutions Beyond Machines.”

Here are just a few examples of “Customer Wins” I have seen addressing these obstacles:

- + 30% increase in business produced with 50% fewer machines
Less floor space, staffing, and expense at higher production rates
- + Three shift operation now done in one shift
Allows for growth but more importantly eliminates staffing challenges on off shifts
- + Customer thought he had to build a second building and increase staff to meet customer demand
Material Handling and Software solution eliminated need for second building
- + Eliminating process flow bottle necks allowed customer to eliminate his raw material inventory to 100% WIP
Better cash flow and floor space utilization
- + A large construction manufacture was missing multiple machine sales opportunities because of inconsistent delivery performance by both outside suppliers and their in-house machines.
Five Messer machines with a material handling eliminated the bottle neck allowing for an additional 100+ machines to be sold annually
- + Being able to accurately quote and know how long to produce the customer order with our software
Provides better process flow scheduling and reduces costing variables

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What does your customer get out of it?

Bill Heller: At Messer Cutting Systems we are now taking a more holistic approach to our customers total cutting process. It is important addressing not just improvement of the cutting machine. We are also creating ways to minimize the other bottle necks. This includes material handling, digitalization software, service along with years of know-how. This portfolio will allow Messer Cutting Systems to provide a better overall value for our customers.

For which types of production companies will this work?

Bill Heller: You may be saying that these types of solutions are only for high end production companies. The reality is now almost all customers are impacted with the lack of available labour along with recognizing the need for digitization so they can better measure their performance.

Having better tools allows them to have a better understanding of their costs and tighter margins. It also allows them to better understand where the obstacles are impacting their bottom line. Our "Solutions Beyond Machines" allow Messer Cutting Systems to eliminate or reduce those obstacles in cutting operation and in turn improving overall business performance.

Which production processes can specifically be improved?

Bill Heller: Companies that used to run multiple shifts and or multiple machines for their daily production need do the same with fewer more efficient systems. These systems not only cut the part but

- + plan the production for maximum arc on time,
- + deliver just-in-time machine data to adjust production processes accordingly,
- + bring material to and from the cutting machine automatically based on the production plans
- + sort and separate parts after cutting with minimum affect from other influencers.

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Does this apply to all cutting processes?

Bill Heller: We have seen these types of solutions from laser manufactures already. They have had remarkable success replacing traditional machines because they

- + provide better efficiency,
- + lower operating costs,
- + with less manual intervention.

At Messer we want to bring this mindset to cutting in general, not just laser.

What do you see for the future?

Bill Heller: We are one of the few companies worldwide, that can provide overall solutions from a single source. "Creating Solutions Beyond Machines" for both traditional cutting processes and laser using our experience and creativity will create even greater customer value.

In dialogue with our customers, we are developing the future of professional metal cutting. Our focus lies on digitization of processes, network integration of cutting and peripheral systems and automation of workflows.

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Bill Heller has spent the last 13 years at Messer Cutting Systems, from 2014 to 2022 as CEO. Prior to that, he was Product Manager of the Material Handling and Laser Machine Lines. Before coming to Messer Cutting Systems, Bill Heller has spent many years in the cutting and welding field, with a background in sales for robotic automation. He graduated from MT. Union University in Ohio with a degree in business.



Caption: Bill Heller, Global Product Manager, © Messer Cutting Systems



Caption: "Solutions Beyond Machines" at Joop van Zanten (Netherlands) with Messer Cutting Systems PowerBlade with fibre laser technology and OmniMat with plasma bevel cutting, OmniFab digitalization solution, OmniWin CAD/CAM software, material handling system. © Messer Cutting Systems



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EXTRA FILE ATTACHMENTS:

**+ BILL HELLER, GLOBAL PRODUCT
MANAGER, MESSER CUTTING
SYSTEMS**

**+ SOLUTIONS BEYOND MACHINES AT
JOOP VAN ZANTEN**

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WHAT WE STAND FOR CREATING SOLUTIONS BEYOND MACHINES

Messer Cutting Systems is a global supplier of cutting-edge technology for the metalworking industry.

With over 900 employees worldwide in over 50 countries, we maintain a constant dialogue with our customers to achieve sustainable user-oriented innovation.

Our portfolio embraces the themes PRODUCT, DIGITAL, SERVICES, AUTOMATION and KNOW-HOW. We will live up to our claim "Creating Solutions Beyond Machines" not just with the most modern cutting systems and solutions for oxyfuel technology.

Appropriate services and training, our own software applications as well as the integration of solutions from our technology partners, e. g. in the field of automation, complete the machine to give forward looking total solutions.

Our Know how combined with our customer-oriented attitude and actions make us the world-wide partner of choice for innovative total solutions on all aspects of cutting systems since more than 120 years.



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