

Custom Header/Column Connections Allows Wall to Wall Coverage In Small Machine Shop

As the owner of a tool & machine shop, Rodney Fuller was running into some large problems. His customer base was growing, and the parts he was running through his CNC lathes and milling machines were becoming larger and more diverse.

“A lot of the parts were smaller, maybe 65 pounds,” said Fuller. “But now we’re getting parts that are 12-inches in diameter, and they weight about 225 pounds.”

The larger parts first created the problem of how to handle and load them into the machines. Without an ideal solution, it began to cut into the company’s productivity.

“I was using an engine hoist, a cherry picker, to load them,” he said. “That just wasn’t working. It would take three of us to maneuver it and load it. Sometimes I’d literally be standing inside the machine positioning it while two other guys were moving the load in. It didn’t take long to realize that I was taking safety risks and taking additional people away from what they’re working on to help load one machine. I knew I needed to change what we were doing.”



With experience in metal fabrication, Fuller’s first thought was to build a structural I-beam crane himself. However, with the two CNC machines already in place in a very narrow workspace with limited headroom, every inch would be critical.

The Gorbels Solution

Fuller decided to go with a 500 pound capacity Gorbels work station bridge crane. No stranger to Gorbels, he knew the system would be easier to move than an I-beam crane. What made the decision easy was the way the system would maximize the space available.

The system featured custom header to column connections, which brought the 16 foot, 11 inch runways right to the edge of room, allowing wall-to-wall coverage. This tight fit was





made possible by installing maintenance gates along the system's runways, which allow a section of the track to be temporarily removed so the bridge can be installed.

"The system has exceeded my expectations," said Fuller. "What used to take three people 45 minutes is now a one person job that only takes a minute or two. Our productivity has improved significantly."

Asked if he has any regrets in choosing the Gorbelt system rather than building one himself, Fuller had no doubt that he made the right choice.

"This has made my life so much easier. The safety is...incredible. It's been well worth the money."