

LPKF StencilLaser P6060

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LPKF
Laser & Electronics

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Imagine being an electronic manufacturing service (EMS) with a regular New Product Introduction period of 3-4 days. Imagine next spending half of that time frame waiting to receive products you can't fulfill your obligations without. With limitation hindering production, it becomes clear more efficient operations are needed. But how can you accomplish this? Where can you look to find the versatility you need?

As an EMS specializing in mounting printed circuit boards, Smyczek GmbH & Co. KG found itself in such a dilemma. The hindrance in Smyczek's case: SMT solder paste stencils.

As a well-established SMT provider with over a quarter century of experience, Smyczek used to outsource production of all SMT stencils to external shops. Finding this to be an inefficient use of Smyczek's 11 SMD lines, General Manager Michael Schlegel sought to maximize his company's production capabilities.

At the 2011 productronica trade fair, Schlegel announced the answer to Smyczek's SMT stencil dilemma: the LPKF StencilLaser P 6060.

The fiber-laser cutting system was installed at Smyczek headquarters at Verl, Germany in January 2012. Since then, the results have been just what Smyczek was looking for.

Now capable of producing SMT stencils on-demand directly at the production line, Smyczek's operations have been greatly streamlined. This saves Smyczek a significant amount of time while adding a level of flexibility previously unseen on the production floor.

The StencilLaser, which is compatible with both reusable stencil frames and standard glue frames, produces intricate SMT solder paste stencils in under an hour. This ability eliminates concerns about delayed production resulting from defective stencils: instead of waiting another 1-2 days to receive a second iteration, a new stencil can be ready almost instantly.

Perhaps as impressive as its speed is the StencilLaser's ease of use. Smyczek employs an apprentice to run its StencilLaser, as powerful yet user-friendly software stores and accesses CAD data at the push of a button. This allows for on the fly adjustments to be made seamlessly.

Today, Smyczek produces all general purpose stencils in-house. But that doesn't mean Smyczek has stopped using stencil shops altogether. Says Schlegel, "For us it was primarily a matter of gaining freedom in production planning. The simpler stencils are currently produced by an apprentice under the direction of our engineers without any real problems. With specialized tasks, we rely on the know-how of our trusted partners." Stencils Smyczek still acquires from an



From left: for Michael Haring (engineer), Annika Pollmeier (apprentice), and General Manager Michael Schlegel, the LPKF StencilLaser P 6060 has become an indispensable tool.

external provider include stencils with very high aperture counts and step stencils.

Smyczek headquarters is home to over 100 employees and a production space exceeding 45,000 square feet. Keeping everything on track can be a challenge, but thanks to the acquisition of the StencilLaser, by May Smyczek had produced the number of stencils it had planned for all of 2012.

Without a doubt, Smyczek has found the efficiency and versatility Schlegel sought to bring to the production floor.



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Established in 1976, LPKF Laser & Electronics manufactures machines and laser systems used in circuit board and microelectronics fabrication, medical technology, the automotive sector, and the production of solar cells. Around 20 percent of the workforce is engaged in research and development