

KNB Tools of America, Inc. Customer Spotlight

The Customer's Story

KNB Tools was founded in 1953 in Tokyo, Japan as Kawanobe Tools Manufacturing, with Honda Motor Co., Ltd, as its primary customer. Today an international corporation with three offices in Japan and one in the U.S., KNB Tools supplies cutting tools used for engines, transmissions and small engine components by the global automotive market. Committed to providing outstanding customer support, KNB Tools opened their North American branch, KNB Tools of America, Inc., in Plain City, Ohio in 2003, growing into a new sales office and production facility by 2006.

The Situation: Setting the Bar High for a U.S. Expansion

With new shop space to fill in a 14,000 square foot facility, and a growing backlog of precision cutting tools to make, KNB Tools of America's Ohio operation aimed to reliably deliver the same high-quality product on which their Japanese counterpart has built their reputation – precision-made polycrystalline diamond (PCD)-tipped and solid-carbide cutting tools. KNB Tools of America was expected to meet the same rigorous quality standards that KNB Tools had been upholding for over 50 years. For nearly the last 20 of those years, customer expectations for quality were met with the use of WALTER HELITRONIC DIAMOND-Series grinding, erosion, and measuring machines.

The Solution: Fulfilling Requirements for Repeatability and Accuracy

Because WALTER machines were being used in their sister manufacturing locations in Japan to establish a quality bar, the North American presence was built around the same technology from the start. Plant manager Luke Uncapher underscored why the decision to purchase their first WALTER HELITRONIC in 2006 was truly the right one for KNB Tools' new chapter producing cutting tools in North America:

"The build quality of the WALTER machine is truly impressive," he said. "These machines are more rigid than others I've used, which means producing higher quality parts on a more consistent basis. When you throw in the power and flexibility of the WALTER software, the decision was a no-brainer."

But it didn't stop with just one machine. Fourteen years after purchasing their first WALTER HELITRONIC grinding and erosion machine, KNB Tools of America is operating three WALTER HELITRONIC POWER DIAMOND machines and one WALTER HELITRONIC POWER 400.

"We had grown from a two-man sales and distribution office to a factory, to accommodate our customers in the U.S.," said Naoya Takamasa, president of KNB Tool North America. "Because we have implemented the Kaizen model, we are continuously exploring new ways to improve ourselves. Due to our competitive costs and lead time, adding more machines gave us an opportunity to expand our territorial area to Canada and Mexico."

The Outcome: A Close and Supportive Partnership

An unexpected bonus of the relationship came in 2018 when the WALTER U.S. office moved from Virginia into UNITED GRINDING's new North American headquarters in Miamisburg, Ohio, just about an hour away from KNB Tools of America. "The proximity of UNITED GRINDING to our business has been so helpful to us," Naoya said. "Service is great, application support is great, and we are so close now, if we want to see any machine or new technology, we just get in the car and drive. We've gained more flexibility to accommodate customer requests and provide faster service. When urgently needed, we've modified or reground customer tools within a few hours, so they could continue to run their production operation efficiently."

Expanding into application support has been another plus for KNB Tools of America. "WALTER ToolStudio is one of the most powerful tool design CAD/CAM software solutions available," said Uncapher. "It's been great to be able to call your application team and get the help we need fast."

