

CASE STUDY

#04: Metal Skills Ltd

easysteel.
A FLETCHER BUILDING COMPANY

Building on trust



In less than 20 years, Easysteel has seen Metal Skills Ltd grow from a fledging business into one of New Zealand's leading contract manufacturers of steel products.

The success story began in 1996, when Graeme Bartlett purchased an existing small business. He was joined soon after by his brother-in-law, Dave Blackett. Since then, they've grown the business from a "small jobbing shop" into an industry leader with 80+ staff.

Operating from a 6200m² facility in Auckland's East Tamaki, they are one of the few sheet metal companies operating 24/7, 5 days a week.

"It's more profitable to have our big machines running through the night, supervised but unmanned," says Dave Blackett. "It also gives our customers a better service...our lead time is reduced by 50%."

"They are one of the few sheet metal companies operating 24/7, 5 days a week."

Cutting-edge technology

The company has invested in state-of-the-art processing equipment - so they can handle everything from specialised and custom work, through to large-volume production runs.

Their plant includes New Zealand's first Salvagnini P4 panel folding machine (which can do an incredible 46 folds in 56

seconds). Other equipment includes three Amada turret punches, two robotic welders, and a robotic Astro press brake.

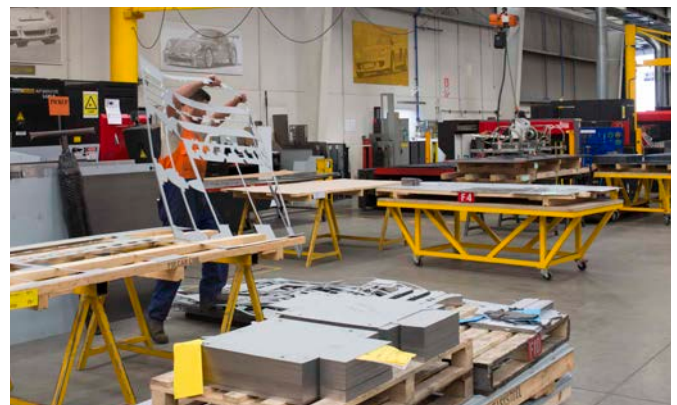
In order to provide a more streamlined service for finished products, Metal Skills also run their own powder-coating line; and have two dedicated delivery trucks.

Their purpose-built 'green building' incorporates eco-friendly features such as water recycling and energy-saving technology.

Reciprocal business

The relationship between Easysteel and Metal Skills has also evolved over the years, as the two businesses began doing some reciprocal business.

As well as providing regular laser cutting services for



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Easysteel, Metal Skills has also been producing motorway crash barriers components for CSP Pacific, which is a division of Fletcher Building.

"It's a fairly labour-intensive job - involving laser cutting, folding, and robotic welding," explains Dave. "The products are then sent out for galvanising before coming back to us to do the final assembly."

Among Metals Skill's other major customers, they supply metal cabinetry to a large office furniture fit-out supplier.

"We like to add value by providing a completely finished product," says Dave.

"For this customer, for instance, we assemble the entire storage system and send them out ready-packed."

Other major areas of business include sorting machines for fruit processing, and robotic packaging systems supplied to engineering companies.

"Their cut to length service is the best in the business."

Quality packaging

Dave Blackett says they can rely on Easysteel to provide product of a consistently high quality.

"Their cut-to-length service is the best in the business. As well as ensuring less waste, it also provides operational efficiencies because we don't have to re-position our machines."

He says Easysteel also supplies an excellent packaged product.

"With imported materials from other suppliers, we've sometimes had issues with broken pallets or strapping coming loose."

"With Easysteel, we can be confident about loading their pallets directly into our machines."

Strong relationship

Metal Skills still deal with their original Easysteel account manager, Elaine McKee, who met the owners back when they had just seven employees. Today, there is a tight team of

Snapshot on Metal Skills Ltd

- Outputs more than 10,000 tonnes of finished product annually
- Commercial, industrial, stadiums, bridges, towers, cranes & sculptures
- Operates from a purpose-built 12,000m² fabrication facility in Manukau
- Partnered with Easysteel since [insert year]
- Notable projects include Forsyth Barr stadium, Eden Park upgrade, Sky City Casino and Convention Centre, University of Auckland Business School, Princes Wharf and Britomart East developments.

sales people who support Metal Skills on a regular basis, including an account manager from CSP Pacific.

Given that Metal Skills runs a 24/7 operation, Easysteel provides them with an extended ordering deadline for next-day delivery.

"We feel that Easysteel really understand our business, and they're always a pleasure to deal with," says Dave.

"And if there's ever a problem, someone will come out to see us almost immediately."

As part of the orientation for new employees, Metal Skills will often take their team for a tour of Easysteel's Penrose site.

"We take them over to show them what Easysteel does, and how the operation runs. Most people are really impressed by their size and scale. We think we're big...but it puts it in perspective when you see the kind of volumes they're dealing with."

