

# CERAMIC

## INDUSTRY

Advancing Worldwide Technical and Traditional Ceramic and Glass Manufacturing

November 2012

### SUPPLIER SPOTLIGHT

## A New Focus on Ceramics



*A new Stahli DLM-705 double-disk grinder has the capability to grind at rates 10 times faster than manual machines.*

Aggressive Grinding Service (AGS) is an industry leader in the precision grinding of ceramics and carbide. From its plant in Latrobe, Pa., AGS serves customers throughout North America. "Precision grinding is our only business," says Lester Sutton, founder, president and CEO. "We started out 24 years ago with one machine. Today, we have a world-class facility with 100 machines and nearly 100 employees working around the clock."

AGS is equipped to handle centerless, surface, ID, OD, wire edm, honing, polishing, lapping and peel grinding. The company has built its business by forming strong relationships with its customers. "Service to our customers is our number-one priority," says Sutton. "Our goal is to have the best quality and fastest delivery time in the industry."

Sutton also cites loyalty to its customers as one of the company's

strengths. "Many of our competitors sell products or services that compete with their customer," he says. "We don't do that. We view our customers as our partners."

### Targeted Growth

Because it sees the potential for substantial growth in ceramic grinding, the company is adding over 14,000 sq ft of manufacturing space to house its new Ceramics Center. "We have been grinding ceramics for years, but recently made the decision to make it a major part of our business mix," Sutton says. The Ceramics Center will be anchored by a new Stahli DLM-705 double-disk grinder that has the capability to grind at rates 10 times faster than manual machines, as well as four new Okuma grinders. "The Ceramics Center represents a multi-million-dollar capital investment on our part. We firmly believe ceramics will be a big part of our future business."

Sutton notes that the dramatic increase in the price of carbide over the past year will likely lead to a search for alternate materials. "China controls most of the tungsten supply and can move the price by adjusting supply

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*In our 34,000 square foot facility, multiple machines in every area create redundant capacity that ensures consistent production and on-time delivery.*

much like the Middle East countries do with oil," he says. That volatility, along with the broad application of technical ceramics, led Sutton to the decision to move more heavily into grinding ceramics.

According to Sutton, from a production standpoint, separating carbide and ceramic grinding operations offers significant



*Two Stahl DLM-705 double disk grinders can hold flatness and parallelism to 0.0001" and can accept a part as large as 11" in diameter in a four carrier configuration.*

advantages, including material handling, grinding speed and feed rates, coolant requirements, and inspection processes. "Having a workforce trained in ceramic material handling, grinding operations and inspection will improve quality and reduce delivery time," he says.

AGS strives to deliver all orders within three to five days. "We have the

built-in, redundant capacity to handle multiple large quantity jobs," says Sutton. "In 24 years, our mission has never changed, which is to provide our customers with superior quality and service with the fastest delivery time in the industry."

State-of-the art CMM equipment and a digital SPC in-process inspection system are used to continuously monitor quality throughout the entire operation. "Shop cleanliness, organization and maintenance are a top priority," he says. "A significant part of employee performance ratings and bonuses are based on how clean, neat and organized the machines, tools and work area are maintained. We have also invested heavily in quality assurance equipment."

According to Sutton, the implementation of these systems has significantly improved quality. The company also recently hired an experienced engineer to oversee the Quality Assurance department. "While our scrap rate is running less than 1%, which is very good, it's still not good enough," he says.

Sutton believes that AGS has the potential to achieve the same success in the ceramics industry that it has enjoyed in carbide grinding. "We are driven to be the best," he says. "That's our goal and we will achieve it."



## Your "Go-To" Source for Precision Tungsten Carbide Grinding & Advanced Ceramic Finishing

Aggressive Grinding Service, Inc. is an industry leader in precision tungsten carbide grinding and advanced ceramic finishing. The company offers a wide range of grinding, honing, EDM and rotary tooling services for industrial wear, flow control and metal forming and metal cutting applications in the aerospace, industrial, mining & construction, oil & gas, and transportation markets.

Aggressive Grinding rises above its competitors by achieving the industry's fastest delivery time on all jobs and using the latest technology to support the company's production and quality control systems.

Aggressive Grinding is headquartered in Latrobe, PA, near Pittsburgh, and was founded by Lester Sutton in 1988.

**Aggressive Grinding Service, Inc.**  
4413 Route 982 South  
Latrobe, PA 15650  
P: 724-537-7722  
F: 724-537-3893  
E: [customerservice@ags-fast.com](mailto:customerservice@ags-fast.com)

**AggressiveGrinding.com**