

VisualMILL does Helicopters!

Craig Huntington is the founder and President of Helicopters West Inc.. of Provo Utah, a company that designs and manufactures specialty tooling for helicopter airframe and gas turbine engine maintenance and overhaul. He recently purchased VisualMILL for his company and this is his experience with using VisualMILL.

The chief programmer and machinist at Helicopters west is Justin Huntington. Not only is Justin mechanically savvy, he “gets it” with computers. The first complex part Justin programmed and milled using VisualMILL was nearly perfect. With a few offset adjustments on the machine control he is on his way to making many more accurately machined parts. Craig appreciates this because he feels that “... American manufacturing needs to revive and young people need to come to understand the satisfaction of making something. Those of us who have actually “made stuff” know what a great feeling this is. “



VisualMILL and VisualTURN help make this possible at a cost that is affordable for small shops such as ours; to bring this independence and work back to our great country.



Craig Huntington
Helicopters West



Justin Huntington pictured in front of his Milling Machine

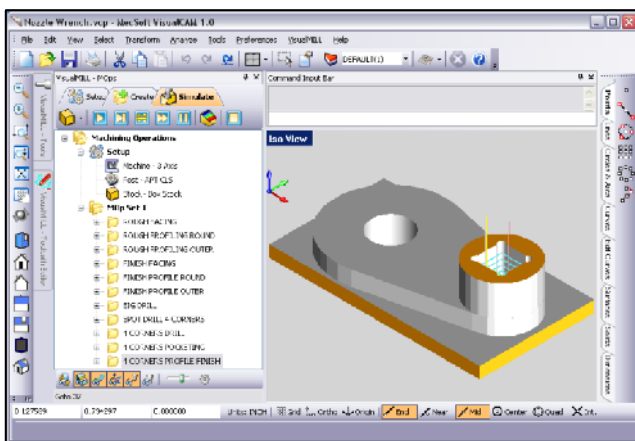
Craig has always had a strong interest and desire for designing and building anything mechanical. He had always dreamed of doing his own machining but it wasn't until the prices of CNC equipment became affordable that a shop such as his could justify the purchase cost.

Once he had his CNC machine, he started looking into the purchase process of CAD-CAM software. He says of this search: "I spent countless hours on the internet trying to determine what is real and what is market hype. I talked to many local users of high end as well as lower end software and have had a number of programs shown to us over the past few years. Each salesman said this was going to be the “answer” for us. But for me, the interface seemed to lack the simplistic ease of user flow that we have discovered VisualMILL provides. “

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Craig ended up purchasing two seats of a highly marketed CAD-CAM package, but the program kept having crashes which would cause a fair amount of productive time to be wasted. Numerous tries to get the issues resolved with technical support were either answered late or never. Craig says he finally gave the packages away to a friend who operates a job shop telling him to “have fun”! After this unfortunate experience, he was resigned to the prospect of having to purchase a high end solution that would cost him around \$8,000 to \$12,000 program. He was also especially bothered about the annual maintenance fees that these programs came with also. But not one to give up, he started his search again and finally stumbled upon VisualMILL.

After downloading the demo program from MecSoft’s web-site and running it for a few hours he and his programmer were able to understand most of what was going on. As questions would arise, these inquiries were always quickly answered in full by the MecSoft technical support team. “In fact, every request for technical support has been responded to via phone or an email within 45 minutes!” He adds that he was impressed with the attitude of everybody he interacted with MecSoft over the phone and that “You would have thought that I was going to be their biggest and best customer. 45 days later, I still feel this about my experience with MecSoft. Very comforting for someone who has a desire and need to machine, yet doesn’t have a great deal of programming or machining experience. “



A typical part that is manufactured by Helicopters West

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For the price and capabilities of the program, and with such great technical support; I almost feel like a thief!

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Craig Huntington
Helicopters West

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In order to see how the VisualMILL would work with the various CAD packages we have purchased, Craig's team imported files into VisualCAM from each package, and the import process has been bug free. He adds that "If there was a bug, it has always been embedded in the drawing going into VisualCAM."

Craig was also impressed with the 2D CAD capabilities of VisualCAM. He says "I was expecting fairly limited CAD abilities in VisualCAM, but have been very rather impressed after using it and have now started doing our 2D drawings in VisualMILL after a short tutoring session from their technical support personnel."

Craig also has taken advantage of the on-line training that MecSoft offers. He says that "The training that has been needed on our part has been pleasantly provided by MecSoft over the phone. I would say that it took me about 25 - 30 hours of working with VisualMILL so that I was feeling comfortable in creating and posting G code on our machine. A good portion of that time was because of my lack of experience with the machine and not the software."



Strengths of VisualMILL would be great value, ease of use, and unbelievably responsive technical support and very friendly people at MecSoft. Rare are companies who have the attitude of friendliness that the great people at MecSoft have.



VisualMILL[®]



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Craig finally adds that "I can't recall ever writing a glowing report of any product, but I have been so impressed with MecSoft, that I asked if I could write this for them."

Here at MecSoft, we fully understand that outstanding customer service goes hand in hand with our outstanding products and are pleased to see that our efforts in this area are being recognized.

About Helicopters West

Helicopters West, Inc. has been in business since 1983. Located in Provo, UT it started out as helicopter charter and maintenance firm. As the market for charter services diminished in Utah, the company changed it's focus to selling gas turbine engines and parts worldwide. They also have recently started to design and manufacture specialty tooling for helicopter airframe and gas turbine engine maintenance and overhaul.

For more information, contact
MecSoft Corporation

18019 Sky Park Circle, STE KL
Irvine, CA 92614 USA
949.654.8163
www.mecsoft.com