

Wintech Testimonial

Service

*An interview with a Matt Thomas
Australian Foam Technology, Vic. Australia*



"I know Wintech will deliver on reliability and peace of mind."

This is an interview with Matt Thomas, General Manager of Australian Foam Technology Pty Ltd in Melbourne about his experience with Wintech equipment.

How would you describe your business?

On the Australian Eastern seaboard, we're one of the biggest and longest standing manufacturers of rigid urethane. We primarily supply refrigerated truck manufacturers who build for companies like McDonald's and Aldi. We also make foam for cool room sub-floors, pattern making, boat building, waterproofing and construction panel.

How big is your business and how many people do you employ?

There are ten of us on staff here so you'd describe us as a low labour, high output business. We now operate three Wintech Fastwires.

Can you describe the Wintech equipment that you have and how long you've been using them?

Back in the early days we used hot wire cutters for processing urethane. These machines had low cut accuracy, were troublesome to operate and prone to scorching the foam.

Wintech were doing the first of what's known as fast wire cutting. What drove us to explore that in the first instance was a shift in engineering and moulding techniques. Our customers required lower tolerances and we couldn't meet that with the machinery we had at the time.

My father, an industrial chemist, was doing consulting work with one of the surfboard blank manufacturers. We found the original Wintech guys who at the time were working on a foam shaping machine. We got in touch with them and bought our first Wintech in 1996.

Can you describe the impact the Wintech equipment has on your business?

It actually sped up our operation. Buying this machine meant improved accuracy and efficiency. It also opened up other avenues for us to sell foam. We could now profile cut complex parts, a service we couldn't previously offer.

Are there any particular features that you find valuable?

In the first instance, the accuracy. We manufacture, cure, and process our own foam. Our tolerance is +/- 0.5mm so accuracy is critical. Customers require ever increasing accuracy of parts and the fast wire machines from Wintech achieve that.

How does this equipment compare with the competition?

Since changing to Fastwire I have only ever bought from Wintech but I do have industry contacts who have purchased cheaper Fastwire machines. I've received calls asking "How do you get this thing to work? It doesn't cut accurately." My answer "Buy local".

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What feedback do you get from the operators about ease of use?

In our business we have staff of varying education levels. The machines are very user friendly and the software straightforward. I have customers who buy my foam to cut in-house. A handful of them have imported machinery as a cost saving exercise then found it doesn't work. The equipment is inaccurate, it falls apart, and if you try to get a spare part you might wait months for it to turn up.

I've never gone down that path. I have faith in the machinery I have bought from Wintech and I know that parts are only 24 hours away. I can't afford machines to be sitting idle for days and so far they never have.

Can you describe the installation process?

It's generally, maybe two days of prep yourself before they turn up. Literally just clearing the area, and getting access. The last two that I bought were slightly different. One was a small machine that came fully assembled. Both came in a shipping container. We organised an equipment handling place to come and lift it out of the box, so that was like a day's work. Wintech had two guys fly over here and commission the machine. It's included in the cost of the purchase.

For the small machine, it was a day and a half. For the big one, they had to assemble it, so it came in a shipping container, and they were here for three days. The thing was commissioned. They do half a day's training with a few of the guys on how to operate the machine. The big one I bought, the three metre machine, that came in a shipping container on a Wednesday, we started rolling it out Wednesday night, Thursday, the Wintech guys turned up, and then by Saturday afternoon, they were training the guys. On Monday morning, we were cutting foam on it.

What's the training experience like for your team?

Oh, they love it. Generally, if a new machine goes in, we still go through that training process, but the boys are all pretty familiar with it anyway.

They're always surprised that, when there's software updates, the digital tricks that they learn. We do profile pattern cutting, and all sorts of stuff, so you can convert CAD drawings to cut quite complex parts on these machines. I think the guys always find there's things to learn. The trainers are friendly, and you can ring Wintech any time, and ask them questions, and they'll always help you out, so it's been good. It's been seamless for years. We've had very few problems.

How fast do you see the return for your business?

It's like any equipment, isn't it? There is an investment: it's not so much what you see in the return straight away on the machine, but it's the lack of defects and how reliable the machine is that adds a lot of value. There are cheaper machines on the market but they have accuracy and maintenance issues. In contrast, these machines go in, you sit them on the floor, within four days, you're cutting foam on them, and you don't miss a beat, and you never get any problems coming back.

That's why we support Wintech. They are super friendly and helpful. They'll still always answer the phone and talk to you, and help you out where they can. They get parts for you. Once the machines go in, you take care of them and they don't stuff up.

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How would you describe the support you received from Wintech?

Everything is set up on Wi-Fi. They're called event diagnostics, so that they can actually look into your machine in real time, and everything that happens on that machine when they're running a programme. We'll set the foam block up in position on the machine and stand away from the machine. Then a programme will run. Every time someone touches a button, presses something, it's recorded in the programme, and the support people can see it.

If you're having problems, you can just ring them. They log in, and they can see what's going on, and say, "Hey, we can see this is happening, you've probably got to fix a fuse here that's about to go, or you maybe need to replace this," so yes, that's fantastic.

What has Wintech been like to deal with?

They're great, they really are. Yes you can get a cheaper machine from overseas but I would not even make the phone call. I know Wintech will deliver on reliability and peace of mind.

If you were talking to someone considering upgrading existing Wintech equipment or buying a similar piece of equipment from Wintech what would your advice be?

I'm actually going through a similar process at the moment, automating some of our manufacturing. We've sent chemicals over to Italy, where they make these automated foaming machines, and we've now found a company that set up a similar thing over in South Africa.

They've offered for us to send them some materials, and they will make us a block of foam, and ship it over, so we can actually see it and how it works before we commit to doing this. It's a big investment so you want to make sure it works the way you want it to work. So my advice would be, if you are going to make a big investment, ring up a customer who's already bought one of them. Get them to cut you some sheets, or cut you some parts, and post it over, and have a look at it.

If someone rang me and said, "Oh, we want to call into Melbourne and see what you do, because we're thinking of buying a Wintech machine," I'd have them in here in a heartbeat. If they wanted to send a block of foam for me to cut up, I'm fine with that. I feel that's the biggest endorsement for a company and a product. If someone's got a Wintech machine, and they're prepared to run some material for you, you'd see with your own eyes how good they are.