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Upgrade Your CAM Abilities

Anyone who programs a CNC today has to be using CAM software, and the odds are they didn't acquire it last week.

All the leading CAM software companies have been in business 25 years or more. So, on average, companies have had their CAM software a dozen years. Would you believe CAM technologies have improved in that time? Have you kept up? Have you invested the small amount of time and money necessary to keep up?

A CNC machine doesn't improve or gain new abilities with time—it just wears out. But a CAM system does improve with time and gains new abilities. If you are not keeping up, not only are you not protecting the value of your CAM investment, but you are not protecting your ability to remain competitive in your CNC business. Your ability to produce parts at a lower cost than your rivals is very important.

Step 1: Are you using your CAM software's latest version?

Most CAM companies offer a maintenance service (an annual subscription fee) to provide updates to their software. Costs vary with the company from 12 to 20 percent of the original purchase price. This provides you access to the latest and greatest version of your software. Having a product that offers this and provides ongoing improvement is a valuable part of your CAM software.

Step 2: When was the last time you utilized training courses?

Training is a valuable tool in making sure you are using your CAM software fully. For example, we get experienced GibbsCAM users coming to factory training classes, making comments like "I didn't know I could do that," or "Who knew there was a better way to program that part?" Most CAM companies offer training through their resellers, as well as online and video training.

Step 3: Do you use your tech support?

Most CAM companies offer phone support—people you can call and discuss your issues and desires with. Again using GibbsCAM as an example, you can call your GibbsCAM reseller, a CNC expert in most cases, for insight and assistance. Gibbs also offers a free factory phone support that customers can call.

Step 4: Does your CAM support all your machines?

Perhaps your shop has grown in the classes of machines it uses. Perhaps you've added five-axis, MTM or Swiss machines. Have you expanded your CAM to keep up?

Step 5: Does everyone who might benefit from CAM have training and access?

Expanding access to your CAM software has many opportunities to benefit your business, if only being less dependent on a single individual programmer. Ease of use is a helpful feature of CAM software to minimize the cost of training.

Benefits you are likely to discover:

- **Ways to program faster.** The latest GibbsCAM offers users automation through Macros to fully automate repetitive family of parts or create custom drill cycles. It has new feature recognition from CAD data and new automatic program generation capabilities.
- **Ways to cut faster.** The latest GibbsCAM offers VoluMill high efficiency roughing, plunge roughing per Sandvik recommendations, and groove tool turning per Iscar recommendations.
- **Ways to get post processors perfected.** There is no need to edit G code.

Take some time now and then to review how well you are using your CAM software. Invest a bit of time and money to keep up with the latest and greatest improvements. Empower your people to stay current and trained on your software. I think you will find the results will help your business every day. ■



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For more information from Gibbs and Associates, a Cimatron Company, please visit www.GibbsCAM.com or call (805) 523-0004.