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# CASE STUDY
## C.R. Onsrud

**Company profile:**

C.R. Onsrud, Inc.
Troutman, North Carolina
160 employees
CNC tooling manufacturer

**Challenges:**

Vendor with long lead time
High rework rate
High mix, low volume

**Bluco modular solution:**

9 Modular welding tables
2 Floor rail systems
Modular component kit

*"Our guys feel like they're working with a big Lego set when they build a Bluco fixture. So the learning curve? I would say there is no learning curve. It's like the biggest playground in the world. We love it."*

- Eric McAllister, Fabrication Manager

### They were stuck on someone else's time line ...

Tom Onsrud, CEO and owner of C.R. Onsrud and Eric McAllister, his Fabrication Manager, were getting tired of waiting. Their standard practice had always been to have the frames for their seventy CNC machine models welded by an outside shop, but that process had them waiting up to 12 weeks for initial delivery. And that was a best case scenario. If the part didn't pass QC once it got back to McAllister's shop, it would have to be shipped back and they'd have to wait another month. He knew that the lost time was also costing

## A MATTER OF TIME ... AND MONEY

them money. "When a salesman says 'I can get a half-million dollar order for a machine if we can deliver it in x number of weeks.' Well, then we had to get in line with the outside vendor, where a good delivery was 6 weeks," says Onsrud. Tom Onsrud knew exactly what the heart of the problem was, and he knew how to fix it. "They were a good shop, but nobody cares about your stuff the way you care about it," says Onsrud. It was that simple. They'd have to bring the process in house. And to Onsrud, there was only one possible way to do that: Bluco modular fixturing.

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TOP: The Bluco modular solution included tables, a rail system and fixturing.

ABOVE: Bluco's Validation Center allowed Onsrud and his team to test their solution firsthand, and ship the frame they built back to North Carolina..

## THE RESULTS:

Welding brought in-house

Accuracy greatly increased

Lead times under control

Efficiency Improved

Better finished product quality

### The first time's a charm

"I ran into [sales engineer] Josh Hill at the Bluco booth at IMTS. Afterwards, I sent him prints to see how he'd handle our parts," says Onsrud. Hill came back with a plan for five custom tables on a floor rail system that would allow McAllister's crew to slide them back and forth to accommodate every frame size. The plan looked promising. So Onsrud sent a base frame kit to Bluco and brought his team to test the solution at the Validation Center. "Our welders tacked it up, welded it out, changed it over to weld the bridges, and shipped it back," says Onsrud. "When it came back to us, we machined it on our big mill and the machinists were very impressed by how accurate it was." That sealed the deal, and the solution was installed at their North Carolina plant.

### Welding comes in-house

As expected, they were now back in control of their time line. "Now we can rearrange things and build a frame in a week. We get to prioritize, and we don't have to worry about other customers in front of us anymore. It just makes everything run a lot smoother," says Onsrud. It's helping his company move toward their ultimate goal of bringing the entire manufacturing process in-house.

But there was another benefit they hadn't counted on: "we're getting better product off the Bluco, so it's cut way down on machining time - which is something we hadn't thought about or anticipated," says Onsrud. "I'm getting reports back from machinists that they're saving 1-2 hours on each base because of the accuracy we can achieve on the Bluco tables," says McAllister. On machines that cost $400/hr to run, those savings add up.

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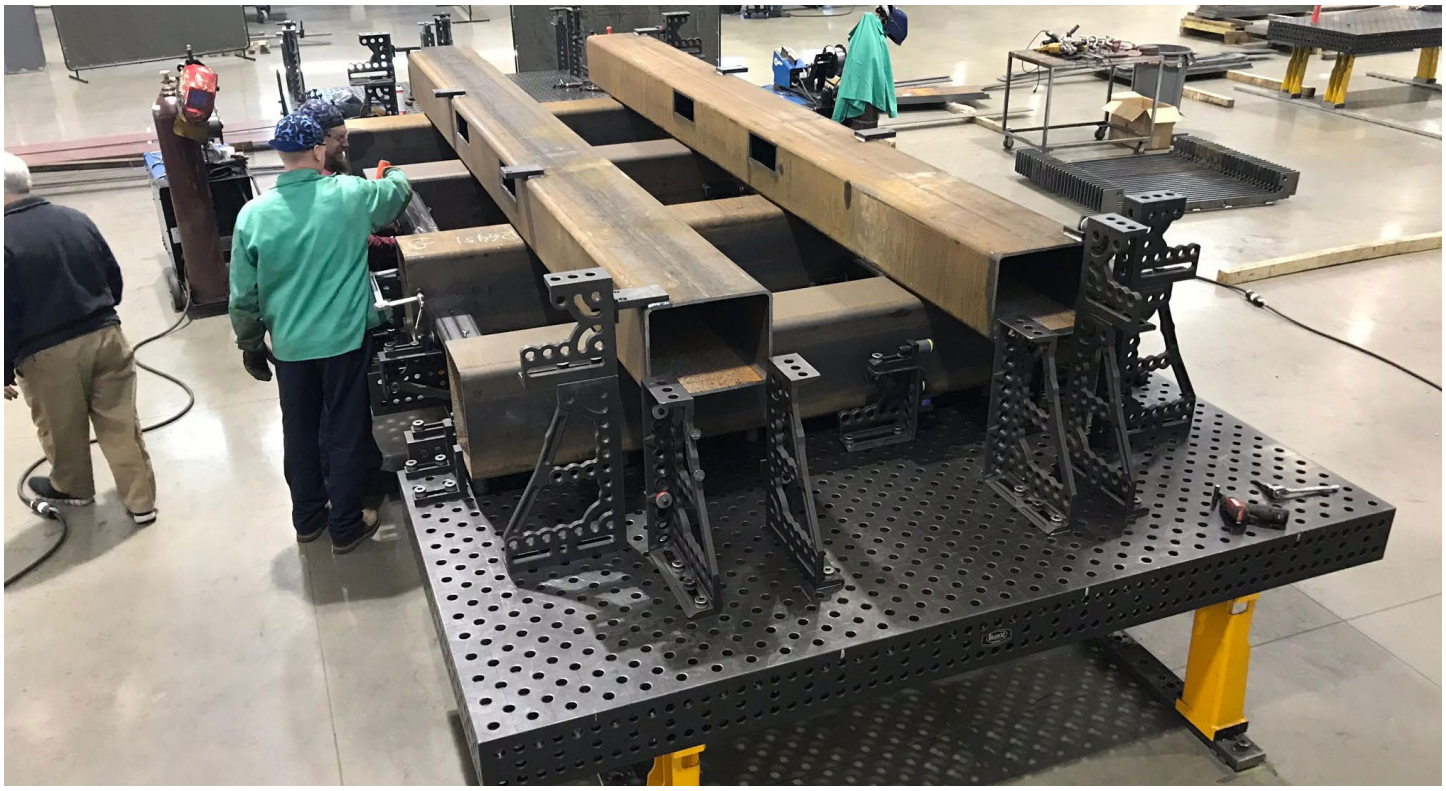

TOP: Onsrud's first Bluco floor rail system.

ABOVE: Onsrud's second Bluco floor rail system helps them increase productivity to keep up with demand.

*"The only struggle we have is trying to decide how big can we make something on these tables. How crazy can we get? And we don't set the bar low. We're going to go to the top as fast as we can. Bluco systems are a great tool to help us get there."*

- Eric McAllister, Fabrication Manager

## High-mix, Low-volume challenges solved

With so many different parts to make, McAllister's team is constantly changing over the fixturing. Bluco modular components help them fixture faster. "When we do runs of 3-6 at a time, once we set up, it's so much easier to loosen the angles, slide them back, remove the part, put a new one in and boom – we're back together again instead of breaking down the fixture every time," says McAllister. It's a solution that's worked so well that they put in a second floor rail system to minimize downtime even further. "These tables have paid for themselves 10 times over," he says.

## Support solidifies the solution

Throughout the entire process of choosing, installing and using their two floor rail systems, Onsrud and McAllister say they've benefited from the support of Josh Hill, one of Bluco's Senior Sales Engineers. Hill was a fabricator himself, who used Bluco fixturing before coming to work for Bluco. "That's one of the things we really appreciate, is that we have a Josh, who's a fabricator. He understands what we're trying to do," says Onsrud. That knowledge comes in handy when McAllister has a new part to fixture. "Our team says it's going to take 40 angles. So I call Josh and ask 'can I get away with 20?' He'll say 'do this instead of that,' and then it's always a 'yes – you can fixture that.' I've never gotten a no from Josh."

As Onsrud reflects on the benefits his company got from switching to Bluco Modular, he sums it up this way: "We got into this because of the frustration of long lead times. But we ended up getting a better product faster." ■