



Left to right: Richard Comer, president/co-owner and Justin Mecimore, CEO/co-owner. The pair purchased GRASCHE USA in 2016.

GRASCHE USA: Go Red. Go Chrome. Go Two Times Better.

By Gary Miller

Hickory, NC—GRASCHE USA Inc., headquartered here, as the exclusive distribution partner for Ceratizit Group, is looking to solve an age-old problem within the wood products industry: how to keep insert tools sharp for a much longer time, and, how to make them last much longer so that insert tools will not have to be replaced near as often.

GRASCHE was originally founded in Remscheid, Germany in 1932 as a manufacturer of circular saw blade bodies. For many years those products were then exported to the U.S. In 1979, GRASCHE opened a location in Hickory, NC, where manufacturing and distribution of those same saw blade bodies could take place locally.

GRASCHE increased its U.S. production capacity, and thus market share, through the construction of a 30,000-square-foot facility in 2001. In 2010, GRASCHE's Hickory, NC, operation was purchased by new owners who formed GRASCHE USA, an independently owned, private company.

It was in 2014 that GRASCHE USA became the exclusive North American distribution partner for Ceratizit, a manufacturer of highly specialized carbide indexable inserts headquartered in Luxembourg. Shortly thereafter, in 2016, GRASCHE USA was purchased by long-time management team members Richard Comer and Justin Mecimore, who made it their mission to spread the word about some of the latest innovations in wood

products manufacturing.

Comer's experience in the CNC machinery and technical sales of wood cutting tools and carbide inserts equipped him with a broad knowledge of the industry. He has used this first-hand experience to educate members of the wood product industry about the benefits of Ceratizit's KCR08 chrome grade knives.

Comer stated, "Standard insert knives made from tungsten carbide using a cobalt binder are highly susceptible to the leaching effect of wood resins and tannins that are the result of the heat and friction of high speed sawing." Comer continued, "The tool is cutting at such a high speed that the heat and friction combined with the compounds leaching from the wood result in something close in composition to hydrochloric acid, which weakens the cobalt binder. The weakened binder then allows pieces of the tungsten to slip out of place on a molecular level, which essentially crumbles the cutting surface so that it dulls much more rapidly than the Chrome KCR08 that we distribute from Ceratizit. As the name would suggest, the Chrome KCR08 uses chrome as the binder. Chrome is corrosion resistant and is much less susceptible to the leaching effects of this acid, meaning that it resists the acids to maintain a sharp edge much longer."

This KCR08 chrome grade also uses a much smaller grain



Pictured is GRASCHE USA's headquarters in Hickory, NC.



GRASCHE USA is the exclusive distributor of Ceratizit Group's KCR08 Chrome inserts, pictured here.

“With our chrome knives, some customers are now able to get through two full shifts before having to change the blades out. The maintenance can be done between shifts rather than in the middle of a shift.”

—Richard Comer, president/co-owner,
GRASCHE USA Inc.

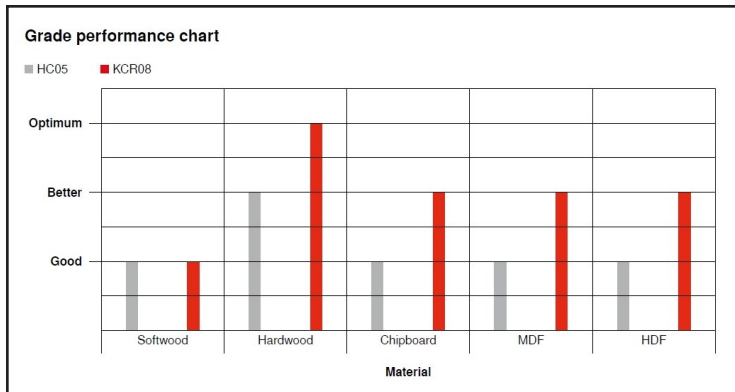
Higher Process Reliability.

**Increased Cutting Performance
Of Up To Two Times Mean Cost
Savings.**

**Enhanced Price Performance
Ratios.**



The distinctive red box in which they are packaged helps KCR08 stand out from other indexable inserts.



structure called sub-micron, Comer offers the following analogy to customers regarding the difference between the physical makeup of standard knives, versus the sub-micron ones offered by GRASCHE USA. “If you’re holding a bunch of marbles in one hand and remove three, you’ll physically see the difference in the structure and where it’s weaknesses now are. That’s the standard insert. Then, if you hold a handful of sand and remove three grains, you won’t even be able to tell. The structure or cutting edge will stay solid much longer with each reduction in its body than the handful of marbles. The chrome binder’s acid resistance and sub-micron structure means that the cutting edge is kept sharp much longer,” he said.

KCR08 is the title of the material’s grade, but GRASCHE USA has a catchier way to help potential customers remember Ceratizit’s products when the time comes to buy new blades: Go Chrome. Go Red Box. Go Two Times Better.

The chemical which gives rubies their red color is chromium, so choosing red packaging was a natural differentiator for GRASCHE USA to take in presenting these chrome blades to the wood products industry.

Comer remarked, “It’s not subliminal messaging, but we want to make sure that our packaging is different from other products on the market. No one else is using red packaging for their inserts so it really helps us stand out. When manufacturers see our advertising or maybe they visit a facility that already uses our blades, they’ll see the red box and maybe that will lead them to give us a call to learn a bit more about our product. We hope that when it comes time to make their next knife order they’ll think, ‘oh yeah, I remember reading about that red box. Let’s try the Chrome ones’.”

Comer added, “We have several customers who are high volume flooring producers and they were using the standard blades but having to change out heads or flip the knives every few hours. That meant they were halting production, sometimes in the middle of a shift, to perform this maintenance. In these high-volume production settings, that down-time quickly adds up to missing out on thousands of dollars in potential revenue. With our chrome knives, some customers are now able to get through two full shifts before having to change the blades out. The maintenance can be done between shifts rather than in the

middle of a shift.”

Another advantage of the knives manufactured by Ceratizit is their quiet operation. Comer stated, “These blades are capable of use in a variety of applications for wood product businesses. Planer mills are especially good examples. Because of the helical placement, where the knives are staggered in the helix, it leads to a much quieter operation volume. These knives are also etched with numbers on the face so that the operator can easily see which side to turn next.”

The wood products industry is constantly evolving to implement new, more efficient and more productive equipment to stay on top of demand. GRASCHE USA sees the next frontier of innovation to be the very blades used to cut these products.

“The carbide technology that’s currently in operation in 90 percent of the wood product manufacturing companies in the U.S. is the same sort of technology that was used 20 years ago,” stated Comer. “No firm can function at its highest productivity without upgrading eventually. Our blades are the next step that will allow wood product operations to achieve their greatest possible efficiency and productivity, as well as cost savings. The cost for the Chrome blades matches the standard grade cobalt blades, but due to their up to double life-span the Chrome blades have the potential to cut monthly blade costs in half. We can’t sell as many blades because of this, but it’s the right thing to do.”

At GRASCHE USA’s facility in Hickory, the company inventories approximately 200 different sizes of knives in different styles. Comer noted, “Ceratizit’s facility in Luxembourg manufactures probably thousands of different kinds of knives, but we cherry pick the ones which fit best into the North American market. We keep a multi-million-dollar inventory so that our customers don’t have to wait weeks for their replacement knives to arrive. No manufacturer can survive that much down time. If our customers need the knives the next day, we make it our priority to help them get back up and running as soon as possible with the help of our distributors. We’re able to get our customers the carbide knives they need the next day for stock standard items in about 90 percent of instances. Having the right products in stock when customers call is a big positive for them and us.”

Customers who depend on GRASCHE USA’s insert knife products include furniture manufacturers, flooring, moulding and other millwork producers. As the exclusive distributor of Ceratizit insert knives in North America, GRASCHE USA serves customers in the U.S and Canada. On staff to serve these customers are three sales representatives, which include Jack Kocar (Jackie@grasche.com), Byron McKenzie (Byron@grasche.com) and Ron Smith (Ron@grasche.com). ■

To learn more, contact 1-800-472-7243 or visit www.grasche.com.