

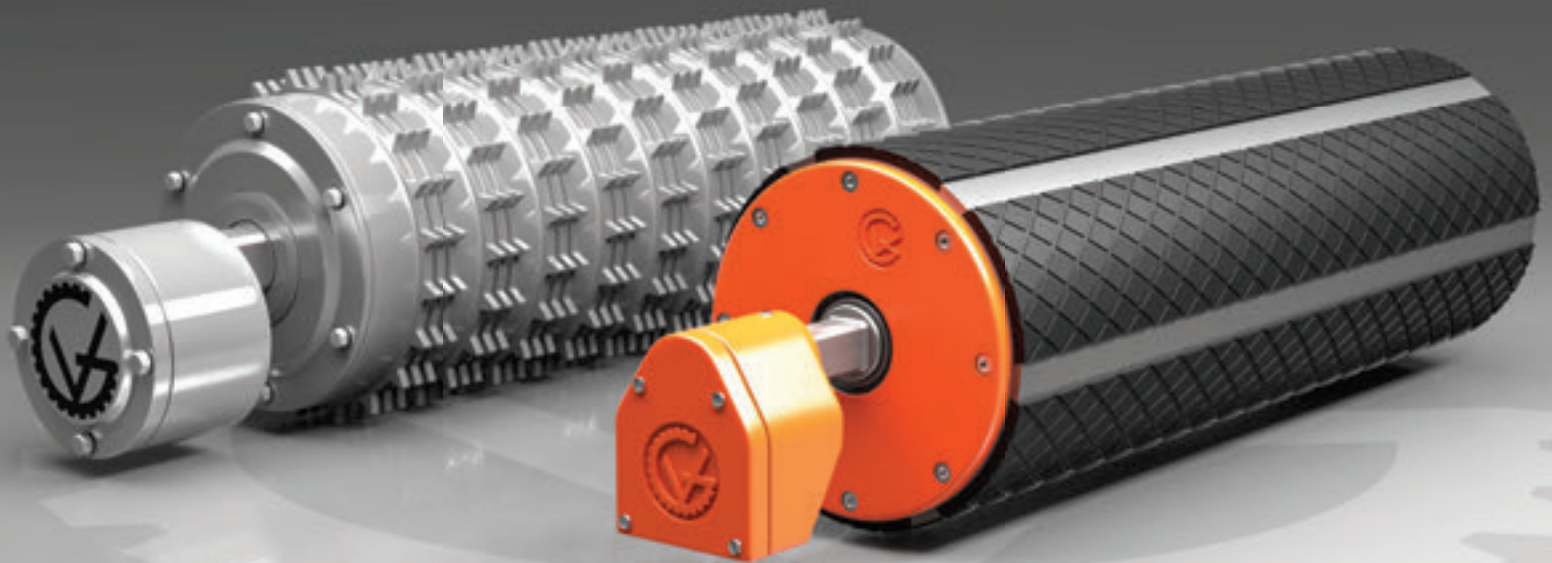


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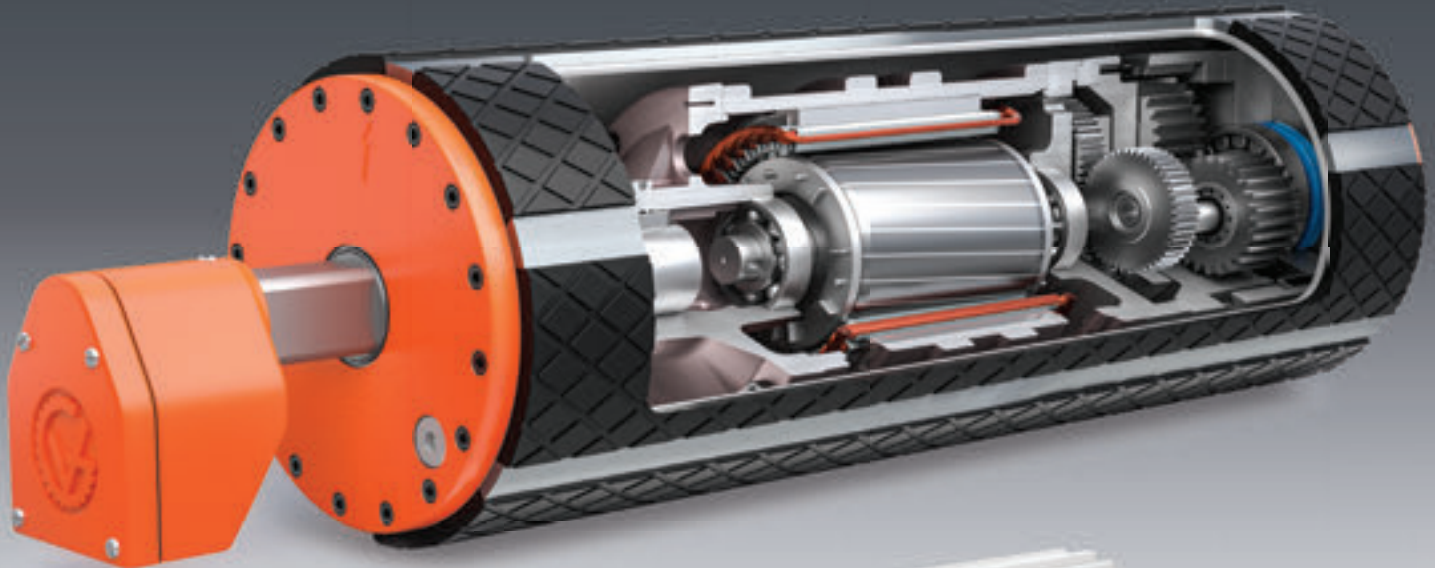


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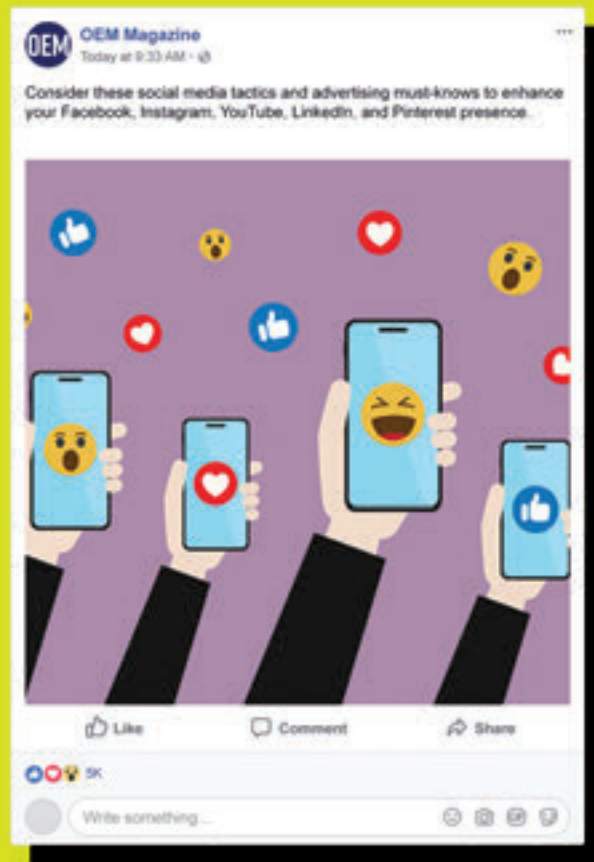


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Social Media for Machine Builders

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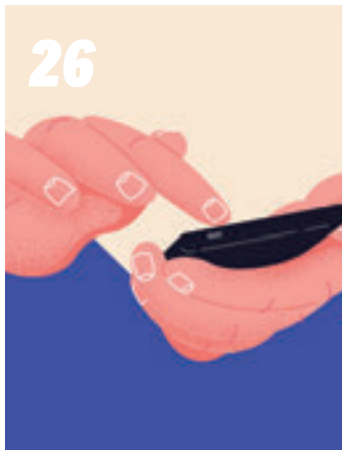
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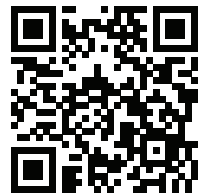


NEW PRODUCT EZGUIDE

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The most notable feature of the EZ Guide™ system is it does not have any protruding brackets or shafts which could be a major safety hazard. The EZ Guide™ system does not have any mechanical components which protrude from the sides of the conveyor during adjustment. All the mechanics are done without the need to protrude past the conveyor, keeping everything safe for those walking close by.

Another feature of EZ Guide™ is it is designed to remain adjustable through curves. That is, the radius of the guides can change as the guide width is increased/decreased in the curve. While there are many traditional guide rail systems which can be made to adjust their width in straight sections, there are very few that can truly be adjustable through a curved portion of conveyor. The reason is because changing the radius of a section is difficult – the guides must bend, and the length of the guide has to increase/decrease as the radius is changed. The EZ Guide™ system handles both of those problems with its unique design.



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FOR THE RECORD

NATALIE CRAIG SENIOR MANAGING EDITOR

See You ... Soon



It's been quite the year, and while I've been getting used to speaking with many of you over Zoom, email, and the phone, nothing really compares to meeting with you in person. We have all had to adapt and shift because of the pandemic, but now, it seems like we may be able to get back to business the way we like to very soon.

With PACK EXPO Las Vegas around the corner, I'm really looking forward to making connections and seeing you face to face again. I'm also excited about seeing all of the innovations that

have come about or may have been accelerated over the past year because of the demands COVID-19 created. If you're not able to make PACK EXPO Las Vegas Sept. 27-29, I can't promise that you won't experience FOMO (fear of missing out). But as we always do, me and my fellow PMMI Media Group editors will do our best to report the news

from the show floor through our website oemmagazine.org and on our social media platforms.

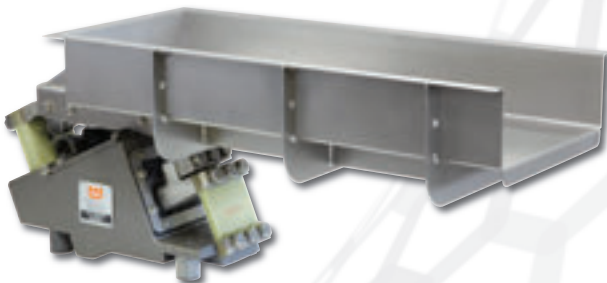
Speaking of social media, these platforms have become so important—especially during the pandemic when we've had to make connections virtually. And even as things get back to normal, it will still be really important for manufacturers to leverage social media to reach potential customers and attract the next generation of the workforce. I had the opportunity to speak with a few OEMs who are handling their digital platforms in innovative ways, and I am sharing their insights on **page 26**. Check out the article to see how your company can best leverage social media, and don't forget to connect with us on our social platforms by visiting oemgo.to/social. See you at PACK EXPO!

Natalie Craig is the Senior Managing Editor of OEM Magazine. She may be reached at ncraig@pmmimediagroup.com or at www.linkedin.com/nataliedcraig.



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FOR OPENERS

STEPHANIE NEIL EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Packaging Makes an Impact



There's a great UnPACKed with *Packaging World* podcast on our website right now with PMMI's Sean Riley and *Packaging World's* Matt Reynolds chatting about 2021 packaging trends. Part of the conversation focuses on social justice-minded package designs. Recently, companies like Hershey launched a digital print campaign called "Her/She" which uses chocolate bar packaging to promote and value female talent, and Unilever rolled out an inclusive pack prototype of its Degree deodorant which is intended to be accessible to people with limb and vision disabilities that render typical pack designs inaccessible.

These are great examples of the power of packaging and a reflection of the future, as Reynolds notes that new packaging designs are ways for brands to express themselves in terms of what they stand for and the values they believe will resonate with their customers and consumers. The question I have is, how will these new designs impact machine builders? Unilever's Degree prototype package, for example, is more than a message on a label, it is "inclusive by design" with a hooked cap, a magnetic opening for easy access, a built-in handle underneath, Braille label, and larger than usual roll-on applicator. I imagine Unilever had to engage its OEMs to produce this prototype. And we're hearing from other CPGs who are saying

they will lean on machine builders more in the future as more material and design changes are inevitable in order to meet new consumer demands. Turn to **page 45** to learn what your customers are asking for.

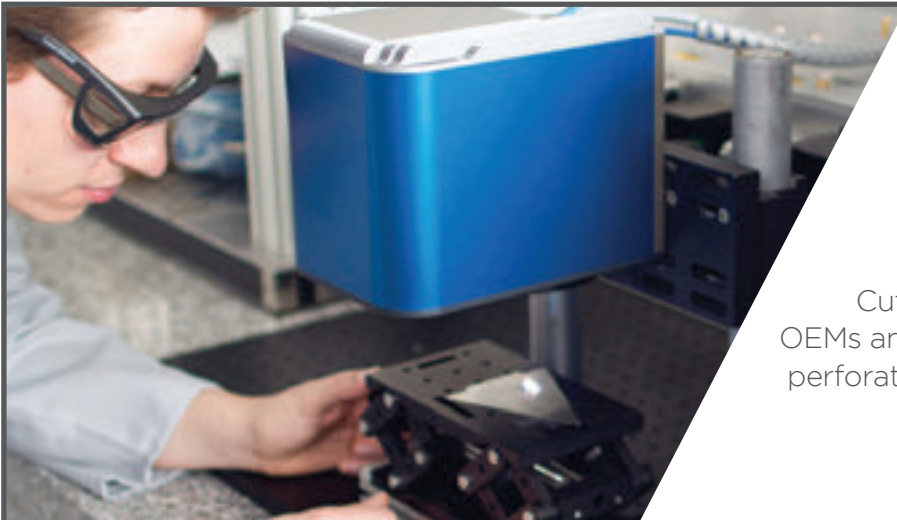
The good news for OEMs is that there's no slowdown in business in the near term. But, like your customers, you need to innovate. Perhaps a new way to capture a holistic picture of a machine during a virtual FAT, as described on **page 11**. Or adopting predictive maintenance technology to be a proactive part of solving the problem of downtime, a topic that was presented at the Executive Leadership Conference in April.

These trends—and much more—will be explored at PACK EXPO Las Vegas and Healthcare Packaging EXPO this September, making 2021 the most important year to go to the show! For more information turn to **page 39**.

To listen to the unPACKed with *Packaging World* podcast go to: oemgo.to/pack2020

To watch a short clip on why OEMs will need predictive maintenance, go to: oemgo.to/predictive

Stephanie Neil is the Editor-in-Chief of OEM Magazine. She may be reached at sneil@oemmagazine.org or at www.linkedin.com/in/stephaniesneil.



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BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

Manufacturing Cybersecurity: Critical Components for Risk Assessment

By the second quarter of 2020, cyberattacks targeting manufacturers accounted for 33% of all incidents across all industries with losses totaling hundreds of millions of dollars. Small businesses are also at risk.

Kim Overstreet, Senior Content Strategist,
Alignment, PMMI Media Group

According to a new report from PMMI Business Intelligence, many manufacturers are still not aware of the tangible risks that result from a lax cybersecurity approach, even despite the growing frequency of cyberattacks directed at manufacturers and the heavy financial burden of costly fixes and expensive downtime. And the speed of industry innovation has often outpaced the digital security infrastructure at manufacturing sites.

Cybersecurity for manufacturers encompasses more than log-in security and email scams. Every sensor connected to a machine, every machine connected to a network, and every network connected to a centralized control system are potential pathways for cyber criminals.

Since every connected device at an operation can potentially be exploited in a cyberattack, manufacturers must be cognizant of the fact that their systems, physical infrastructure, and employees, must all be protected from nefarious outside forces seeking to gain entry into the operation.

There are critical components that need to be assessed to achieve a robust cybersecurity system:

- Perimeter or network detection and firewalls to safeguard vulnerable points, such as: sensors, actuators,



anything with an IP address.

- Implementing cybersecurity best practices and end-point management.
- Cybersecurity budgeting, staff training, and keeping up to date.

A managed services provider director said, “Best practices for cybersecurity require a holistic approach across the entire company at every vulnerable point of entry.” And another managing director at a cyber partner said, “At this time in our world, it is not if there will be an attack on your company, it is when, and that statement applies to all companies regardless of size.”

In the first quarter of 2020, attacks targeting the manufacturing sector accounted for 11% of all cyberattacks that occurred across all industries, and by the second quarter, cyberattacks targeting manufacturers accounted for 33% of all incidents across all industries. In 2020, 28% of all breaches recorded occurred at small businesses.

This increase in attacks is especially alarming given the growing cost to manufacturers that experience a cyberattack. According to the report, in 2020, the average cost of a cyberattack stood at around \$3.86 million, and that does not include the impacts of lost opportunity or damaged customer loyalty. It often takes manufacturers a significant amount of time to identify, isolate, and resolve a cyber intrusion—on average 280 days to identify and contain, but to completely resolve an attack and address any damage, affected operations must be shut down for an average of two weeks.

Despite these facts, 34% of manufacturers state that the risks of a cyberattack and the need to implement a cybersecurity defense are not even on their radar for consideration. And in many cases, manufacturers have not kept up with plans to safeguard their technology infrastructure, even if they had them previously.

Download the PMMI Business Intelligence, “2021 Cybersecurity: Assess Your Risk” by visiting: oemgo.to/cyberreport

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EMERGING LEADERS

Wes Garrett Excels in Building Relationships with System Integrators

Natalie Craig, Managing Editor



Wes Garrett's role at FANUC is to grow market share and increase unit sales as the account manager for authorized system integrator sales within FANUC's Pick/Pack/Palatize/Fulfillment department. After getting his Bachelor of Science in mechanical engineering at Michigan Technological University, Garrett started working with robotics in the automotive market at FANUC. He then wanted to make a shift into the packaging product segment as a product manager for FANUC's palletizer robots and software, which gave him more experience on the sales side of the packaging business. Now, Garrett handles everything from building relationships with existing authorized sys-

tem integrators, to finding and developing new integrators. He also helps produce three conferences a year to assist with authorized system integrator growth. Read on to learn how he got his footing in the industry and at FANUC.

OEM: What is it like working at FANUC as an emerging leader?

Garrett: The time with my company has been great. There are so many departments to work within. Since I have been with FANUC, I have been promoted to senior engineer and to account manager, while also holding titles from process engineer and product manager. FANUC has encouraged me to engage in the PMMI organization by attending the Executive Leadership Conference and Annual Meetings, along with sitting on the Emerging Leaders Committee. In addition to my involvement with PMMI, my company gives

me a great amount of latitude to go and do what's needed to grow professionally.

OEM: How do you help your company innovate?

Garrett: I work very closely with my customers, the FANUC Packaging Segment, and FANUC Product Development to help enhance and bring new products to life that the packaging industry needs. This could be a new robot with unique payload, speed capability, or software that allows a robot to execute a task more efficiently.

OEM: What fascinates or intrigues you about the packaging segment, compared to the experience you had in the automotive space?

Garrett: The most fascinating part of my job is being able to help my customers solve packaging automation challenges and then see them come to life. What gets me excited about packaging is the variety of applications and products. I'm always looking for a new challenge and packaging has been great for this.

OEM: As an emerging leader, what were some obstacles you faced in your career and how did you overcome them?

Garrett: As an engineer by degree and mindset, I had to adapt to take on a sales role. I needed to leave behind the number crunching and details to focus on selling. Selling is a major departure from engineering, I keep my engineering hat in my back pocket but wear my sales cap prominently.

OEM: What advice do you have for other emerging leaders about getting involved in packaging or robotics?

Garrett: Get as much education as you can on packaging. Attend PACK EXPO and visit a packaging plant. It's crucial to understand all the processes involved from the beginning of a product's life to the end of line where it is shipped to the customer.

OEM: Are there any technology trends you are keeping an eye on?

Garrett: I have my eye on 3D vision and artificial intelligence as they continue to evolve. I'm keeping a close eye on the products available and where they can be best utilized in packaging or fulfillment.

For more information on PMMI's Emerging Leaders Network and to learn how you and your company can get involved, visit: oemgo.to/emergingleaders

Easily share this article with your peers: oemgo.to/wesgarrett

INDUSTRY NEWS



Reinventing Remote Maintenance

Adtance adds a new twist to remote service with Fieldstreaming, which can connect multiple cameras—from smartphones to drones—providing a holistic view of machines and the plant floor.

Stephanie Neil, Editor-in-Chief

Manufacturers are well aware of the benefits of remote management technology in light of social distancing mandates and travel bans related to COVID-19. Armed with a camera, an Internet connection, and some special software, maintenance technicians located offsite can help onsite operators manage or fix equipment on the plant floor.

This setup, however, is limited to the line of site of the operator holding the tablet or smartphone used to stream the machine data to the offsite expert. What's really needed to make remote management an integral part of the factory of the future is a way to get a holistic view of the machine, the line, and the entire plant floor.

Enter Adtance, an after-sales service technology provider, which earlier this year introduced new capabilities within the Adtance Support module of its cloud-based Smart Services Platform 4.0.

The service platform supports everything from ticketing, document management, workflow, parts, visualization, and predictive maintenance. Now, with the addition of the Adtance Fieldstreaming offering, the suite includes a module for live remote support capable of connecting every type of camera to the system, including cameras within smartphones, tablets, computers, security cameras, drones, and even underwater remote operated vehicles (ROVs). This enables live stream views of machines from various angles simultaneously.

"We've seen customer demand for live remote support, training, and collaboration skyrocket, in part because of the current COVID-19 challenges, but also due to increasingly complex machines and a shortage of highly skilled technicians," said Nils Arnold, co-founder and CEO of Adtance. "Our new Adtance Support and Fieldstreaming solution is uniquely suited to address the growing set of remote service use cases. Companies want service technicians to be able to view machines from a variety of angles in real-time, conduct live remote user training from multiple perspectives, and collaborate remotely using multiple cam-

eras. Our new Support Module and Fieldstreaming Solution makes all these use cases possible and simple."

The Fieldstreaming system comes with a case of equipment comprised of any number and types of cameras as well as a power supply unit, an internet cable, and connection cables for each camera. Using Adtance Support, the stationary cameras can be controlled remotely by a service technician as can moving cameras, which allows for tilt and zoom for viewing a machine from different angles or to get a big picture view of the plant.

In addition to remote support for maintenance, the Support Fieldstreaming set up can be used for training, for factory acceptance tests (FATs), or to improve collaboration and communication.

Users can start a session by sending a message, document, or video recording in addition to initiating a session through a video call. No app is needed, as it runs on all browsers and mobile devices, the company said, with invitations to sessions shared by simply sending a link.

At any time during a session, users can send messages, documents, recordings, open a live video chat, or collaborate using a digital whiteboard. In addition, snapshots can be taken during live video streams and users can mark up the video with circles, arrows, or pertinent notes. The module also now allows closed sessions to be reactivated and viewed again at any time. The documentation remains in place and participants can be invited back into the session. This saves time and significantly improves customer service, especially when there is a complex or recurring problem with the same customer.

While there are many after-sales offerings available to manufactures, what sets Adtance apart is its comprehensive offering, Arnold said. "What makes us unique is that we are the only company currently which can provide our customers with a single point of connection if they want to digitize their customer service," he said referring to the centralized Smart Service Platform which includes the following modules:

Advantage Support – Enables live remote support, inspection, and maintenance for customers, utilizing devices such as smartglasses and multi-camera fieldstreaming.

Advantage Workflow – Digitizes, analyzes, and optimizes all workflows, including everyday processes, such as maintenance instructions.

Advantage Process Visualization and Monitoring (PVM) – Monitors the performance of individual machines, as well as entire industrial plants.

Advantage Predictive Maintenance (PM) – Analyzes and evaluates operational data in real time through the continuous monitoring of machines or the entire production plant using built-in sensors. Machine learning-based analysis offers predictions about potential downtime, as well as warnings if a piece of equipment will require maintenance.

Advantage Ticketing – Standardizes entire customer service channels by bundling different channels into one system, including e-mail, telephone, SMS, and social media. Creates order and clarity by providing different escalation levels with the respective reaction and resolution times.

Advantage Document Management (DM) – Stores all customer service documents centrally, as well as controls the access rights for security and privacy purposes.

Advantage Parts – A central catalogue system to ensure that all spare part information remains centrally located and easily discoverable.

Manufacturers or machine builders can start with a single software module and build up to the full offering or integrate individual modules into an existing system, including competing systems.

What also makes Advantage different, Arnold said, is the ability to connect to any kind of camera—be it a security camera or a drone—and the platform’s ability to do language translation. Specifically, for companies that operate globally, communication barriers are overcome as Advantage Support now includes translation for 147 different languages. Users simply select a language, speak, then click a button and the system translates their speech into the selected language enabling companies to work with technical experts around the world.

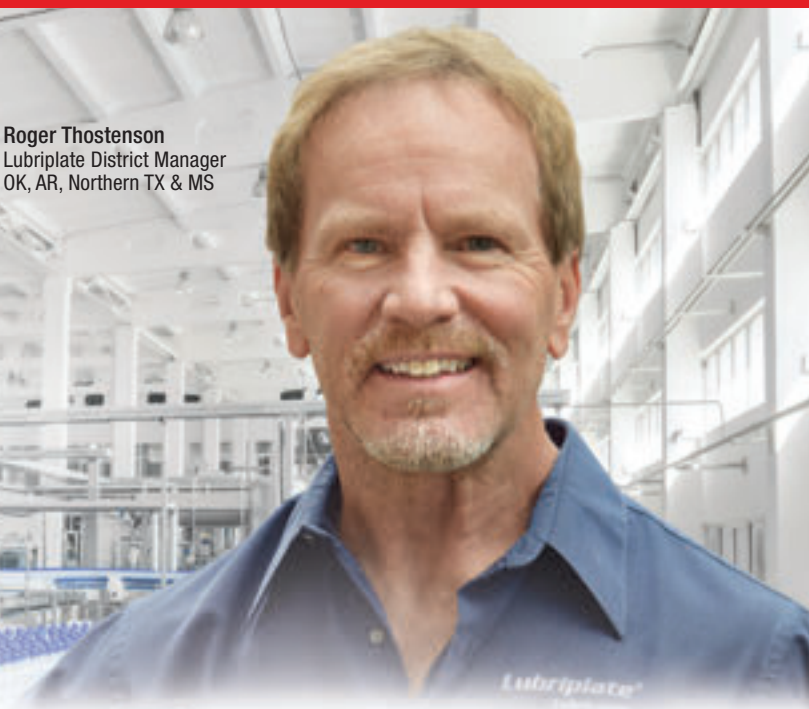
The Advantage Smart Services Platform 4.0 with the integrated Support module and Fieldstreaming is immediately available in a software-as-a-service subscription setup.

WATCH: In this Take 5 segment, *OEM Magazine’s* Stephanie Neil talks about Advantage and new services OEMs will need to deliver as manufacturers reshore operations. Watch the video here: oemgo.to/take5remote



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SALES FOCUS



Mitigating the Risk of the Lawyer Effect

Jay Spielvogel, CEO, Venator Sales Group



“*My boss asked me to join this meeting, but I am not really sure what the purpose is.”*

Sound familiar?

You receive a trade show lead or secure a referral with a high-level decision maker and they ask their people to join the first call. In an environment where top decision makers are looking to mitigate risk and drive consensus on buying decisions, quite often they will either ask to include or will simply invite one or more of their team members to early-stage meetings. In most cases, if asked, the higher-level stakeholder will say that the reason for including the others is based on efficiency since

they will be part of the decision-making process. He or she may say something like, “Your timing is good, in fact I would like to speak further and include a few of my people to join us.” Most salespeople and their managers see this as an extremely positive move that will shorten the sales cycle.

“My prospect invited their entire team to the first meeting; we are in great shape!”

Great shape, that is until you walk in the room or open the conference line.

Let’s think about the subconscious, but entirely rational reason the higher-level person is inviting the others: He or she wants to offset their own subjective interests and bring objectivity and balance to the situation. I call this type of thinking the “lawyer effect.”

For example, consider what happens when you ask a lawyer to review a contract. The lawyer’s responsibility is to red line the contract, simply as a function of his or her role in the transaction. I’m not implying that the requested changes made by a lawyer in contract situations are not critical but imagine paying a lawyer thousands of dollars to review a contract and the lawyer has no changes to the

document; in fact, he or she says everything looks perfect. This rarely happens as the lawyer must find challenges or their role in the process becomes irrelevant.

Now, imagine a person being invited to a meeting by their boss. Quite often, there is a need to justify his or her presence at the meeting in the same way as a lawyer does by playing the part of the devil’s advocate and asking the tough questions. Most salespeople become so overwhelmed with enthusiasm that they fail to notice that the higher-level person becomes the silent one in the room, abdicating most of the due diligence questions to their team members.

To illustrate this point, I was recently involved in a second meeting with a CEO and her regional manager. The regional manager contradicted and challenged everything the CEO shared with me in the first meeting regarding revenue-related issues and initiatives. Luckily the CEO was resolute in her belief that they needed help and was willing to challenge him during the call. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. In many circumstances, the deal falls apart due to a lower-level stakeholder who maintains the dominant and outspoken role in the meeting with a salesperson.

“Complex selling is less about titles and more about politics, influence, and power.”

It’s not what happens in these meetings that matters, it’s what does not happen. At some point in every complex sale there will be a need to meet lower-level stakeholders who validate the solution. Some refer to these people as the stakeholders that can say no but can’t say yes. The problem with including these individuals in the first or even second meeting is the lost opportunity to have a truly authentic and transparent dialogue with the decision maker. Consider how nearly impossible it is to get deeper issues, concerns, and vision, or an honest need state from a decision maker in front of their people. Even worse, ever try asking a person to share their departmental issues in front of their boss?

The response you will hear most often is, “Everything is working well but we can always improve and are open to see what you have to present to us.”

The counter-intuitive solution

Get in front of the issue by taking control of the process early in the cycle. Most high-level stakeholders will appreciate and respect a salesperson that is willing to negotiate the process steps. Challenge the notion that it is efficient to bring in lower-level people to the initial meeting or call. Here's an example:

"I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you and your managers. Would it be okay if the next call is between you and me? Even though I would be more than happy to speak with the other members of your team on a subsequent call, I have found it most effective to have a conversation with the leader first, which allows for an open dialogue focused on your individual perspective. If after our conversation we both decide there is reason to continue, we can schedule follow-up calls with whomever would be part of the decision process."

"But the more decision influencers that attend the first meeting the better off we are."

This approach may seem counterintuitive to conventional (more is better) thinking—until you consider how often early-stage meetings with multiple stakeholders are monopolized by contradictions in perspective, vision, and hidden agendas. If you subscribe to the belief that the most critical perspective is

from the person who signs off on the budget, then consider the importance of getting that perspective one-on-one. The alternative is "the lawyer effect," where the subordinates will see the meeting as an opportunity to "represent their boss' interests, needs and opinions."

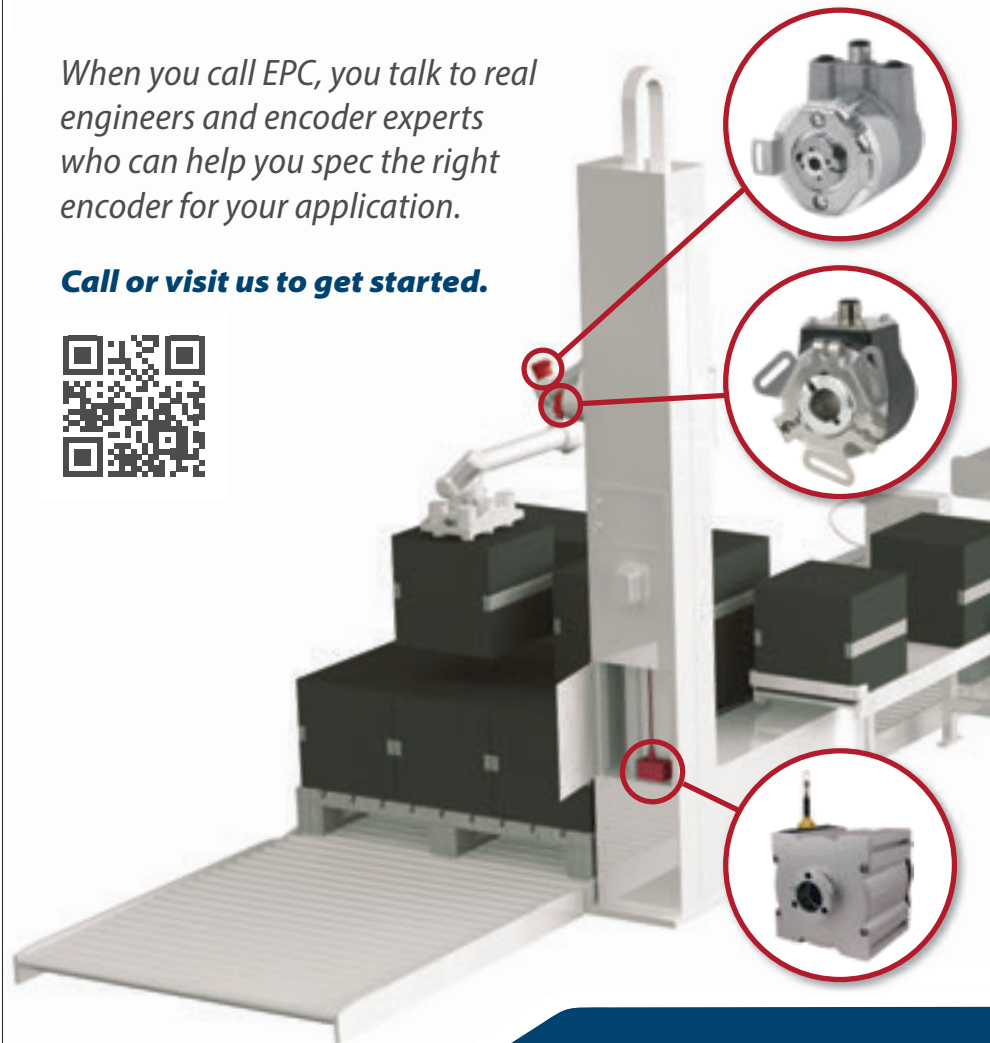
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Serpa's Next Big Move

Grounded by innovation and boosted by a recent acquisition, there's so much opportunity on the horizon for this end-of-line equipment manufacturer.

Natalie Craig, Managing Editor

It's a good year for Serpa. The California-based OEM is currently undergoing a transformation as it was recently acquired by ProMach while hitting its fourth year of record growth. *OEM Magazine* caught up with the end-of-line equipment manufacturer to see what's been propelling its growth and how the business is adjusting to a huge acquisition.

The company is no stranger to growth and innovation, which is what it has been doing since Fernando Serpa, the OEM's founder, created Serpa Packaging Solutions in 1985 after accumulating enough experience as a service technician to realize that machinery could be easier to operate and more maintenance-friendly.

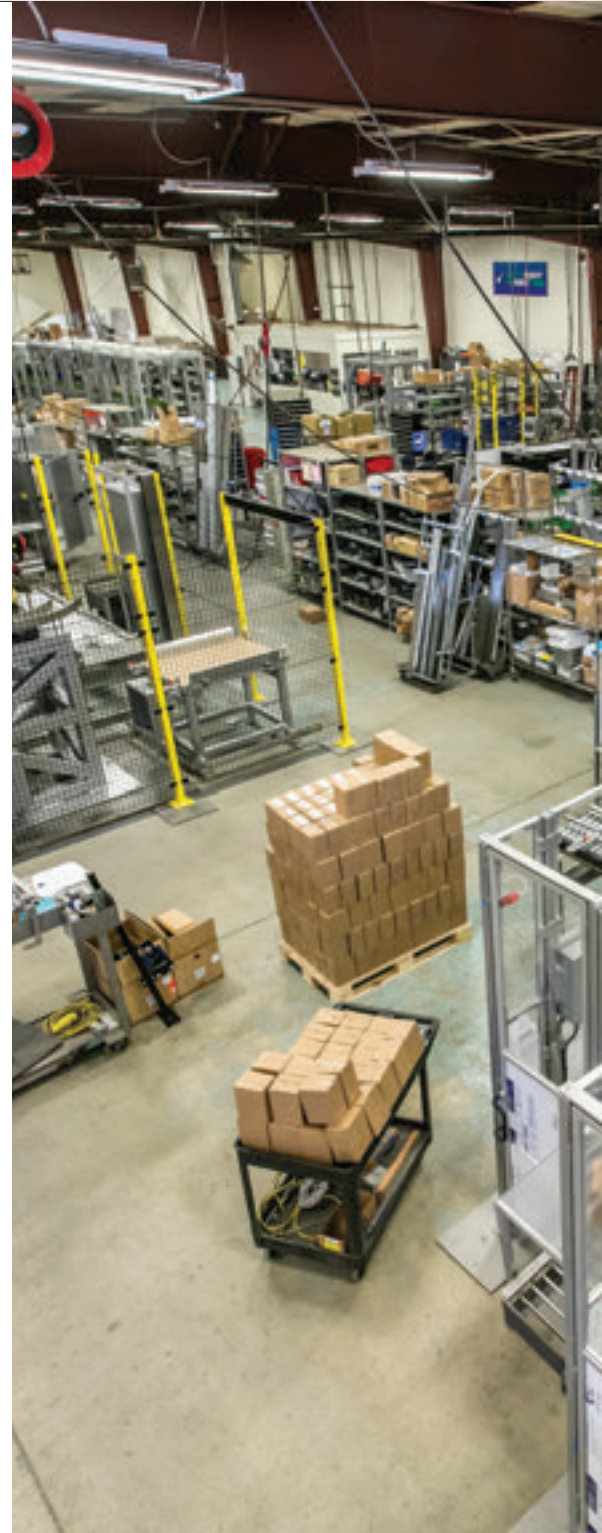
"I worked for a company in an industry that offered manual machines, and I started just breaking the chain. I worked my way up from the bottom and then became a service technician," Serpa says. "I traveled throughout the country and overseas fixing this company's machines, which didn't have the best designs and sometimes equipment was sent out that wasn't completed. So, I was forced to make parts and re-design equipment on the fly in the field. This experience made me more aware of how a company should operate, which is what motivated me to get out and create Serpa."

But the company isn't just set on its original mission to create maintenance-friendly machines. Over the last 10 years the OEM has become a systems integrator, catapulting its expansion and landing the company on Inc.'s 5000 Fastest Growing Private Companies list.

"When I started 12 years ago, we were only in a 30,000 sq.-ft.-building," says Aaron Metzler, national sales and applications manager at Serpa. "A year later, we broke ground on another 30,000 sq.-ft.-building to expand our machine shop capabilities and accommodate our full line capabilities that we could do in house. We were probably a \$10 million company at that point."

Now, Serpa has reached close to \$35 million in annual revenue, 20% of which comes from its integrator business.

"What really excites me is our full line integrations that we've really been tapping into lately," says Justin Neece, vice president of operations at Serpa,





Serpa

Location: Visalia, Calif.

Established: 1985

Leadership: Fernando Serpa, Founder and President;
Aaron Metzler, National Sales and Applications Manager;
Justin Neece, Vice President of Operations

Revenue: \$20 to \$50 million

Employees: 121

Field service personnel: 6

Facility: 70,000 sq. ft.

Markets served: North America and some international markets

Industries served: pharmaceutical, medical device, nutraceutical, food, household, industrial, tobacco, beverage, and personal care

Product range: Cartonners, case packers, robotic palletizers, sleeves, leaflet feeders, and custom solutions

Standard controls platform: PLC, Allen Bradley



Fernando Serpa, Founder and President



Justin Neece, Vice President of Operations



Aurelio Lara, a mechanical assembly tech, works on the product bucket conveyor for a cartoner.

noting its work in the pharmaceutical and CPG industries. “We just got done with a full bottle line for a top 20 pharmaceutical company, and we took it all the way from the beginning to the end. And with that, we’ve become a lot more efficient, and we’ve been able to take on a lot more of those large lines as an integrator.”

For example, another project Neece mentioned was an integrated line for a multinational personal care corporation, which included three Serpa machines, complex robotics, cameras, and conveyors, all of which had to be deployed within a short lead time.

Both Neece and Metzler have been at Serpa for more than 10 years and have been able to see the company expand its product line and capabilities year after year.

Serpa was founded on cartoners, then the company began designing case packers, and, most recently, it has expanded to robotic palletizers and auxiliary equipment like a patented insert feeder, tamper-evident labelers, and checkweighers to complement its core equipment offering.

With its rapid growth and integrator status, the end-of-line equipment



The inside of a Serpa case packer being assembled on the OEM's floor.



This is Serpa's P150 intermittent cartoner which features a balcony design that provides maximum access to all of the drive components from one side of the machine.

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manufacturer also caught the attention of ProMach, which acquired Serpa in February.

“I’m turning 60 this year and a lot of companies have been looking at [Serpa Packaging], including ProMach, for about three years,” Serpa says. “I’ve had conversations, but I said, ‘Nah, I’m not going to do it.’ But this time around, the timing was perfect. The main reason I chose ProMach was because I wanted to be good to my people. I didn’t get the company to this point by myself and I have some very loyal people here—they’re like my second family.”

What “ProMach Built” means to Serpa

Serpa’s Visalia, Calif.-based team will join ProMach’s Robotics & End of Line group, which is led by the group’s senior vice president Hutch Coburn. They will join the ranks of some of ProMach’s other brands like Brenton, Dekka, Edson, Orion, Quest, Rennco, Texwrap, and Wexxar Bel.

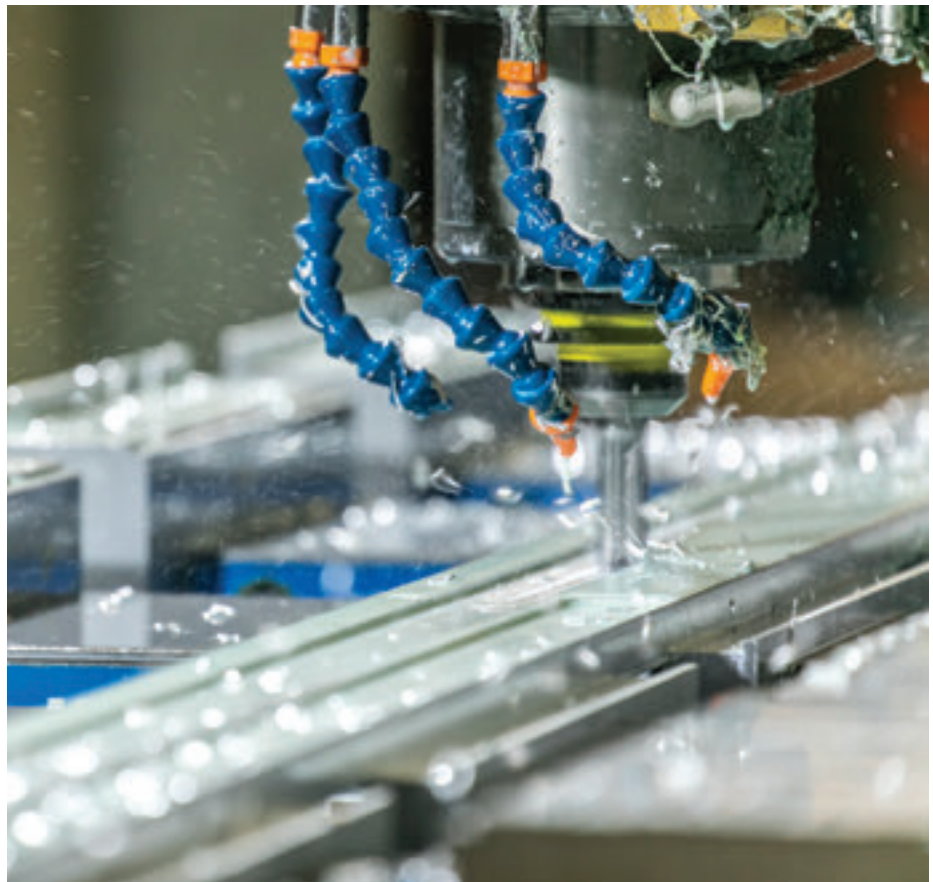
“The addition of Serpa to our Robotics & End of Line portfolio means our customers have access to one of the most robust lineups of end-of-line solutions in the world,” Coburn says. “We’re excited about what Serpa brings to ProMach with their cartoning and end-of-line capabilities.”

The ruggedness of Serpa’s equipment, its speed-capabilities, user-friendly operation, and rapid, repeatable changeover technology initially attracted ProMach, according to the company’s president and CEO Mark Anderson.

“Serpa is no stranger to the ProMach organization,” Anderson says. “We’ve worked with them on numerous projects over the years across multiple ProMach product brands and their customer-focused approach has always made them a wonderful partner. We’re excited to welcome Serpa to the ProMach family and look forward to working with their outstanding team as they continue developing innovative solutions, expanding into new markets, and bringing immense

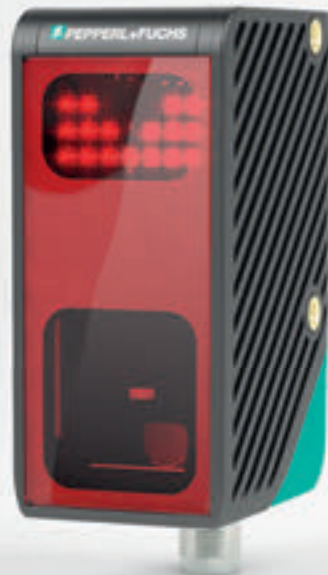


Serpa’s pharmaceutical robotic palletizer with custom end of arm tooling.





Spider robots sit atop a conveyor on one of Serpa's intermittent cartoners.



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value to their customer base.”

Not only is ProMach optimistic about having Serpa on their roster, but the OEM’s employees are equally excited about the opportunities that the acquisition will afford the company.

“Before the acquisition, we were our own company and we did things our own way, even when we integrated and collaborated with other companies,” Metzler says. “Being a ProMach company now, everyone is going in the same direction with the same goal and makes it very easy for collaboration between many different organizations.”

Serpa’s Neece, who has been at the company over the past decade, is looking forward to seeing how much more Serpa will grow now that it’s a ProMach company. ProMach will continue to invest in Serpa’s employees, brand, products, services, and facility to further advance its position as a leader in end-of-line packaging technologies.

“One of the biggest benefits of this acquisition is the sales potential and sales consistency,” Neece adds. “ProMach will also put new equipment in on the machine shop side and software on the engineering side, which is something I can’t wait for.”

How Serpa innovates

Investing in the engineering and machine shop side of the business is appealing to Serpa as it’s been on a bit of an innovation streak. Like many OEMs, its innovation comes from having to solve a customer problem or need, and Neece says Serpa’s customers keep them on their toes.

“Between sales and engineering, we are always needing to innovate within the machines, and we are constantly being pushed to try something new,” Neece says. “For example, there’s always been an issue with feeding inserts into high-speed applications, and we’ve always had to outsource and depend on other companies to provide us a good product for leaflet feeding inserts. But Fernan-





Scott Pitchford, a mechanical assembly technician, works on the vacuum collator system for a cartoner.

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do had an idea of how we could make this better.”

Serpa engineers, in collaboration with customers, looked at all of the things that didn't work and all the issues they've had with existing feeders and they created something better.

“For our new leaflet feeder systems, we knew getting the leaflets to the feeder has always been a difficult task because you're basically trying to handle these little paper cards, and then transferring a lot of them at once to a magazine at a high speed,” Neece says. “So, after looking at what wasn't working, we thought ‘why don't we just transfer them out of whatever they're coming to us from right into the feeder?’ And so now, we've got the standard leaflet module that unloads the leaflets out of the trays that they come in. Now, we're able to transfer the leaflets out on the trays and put it into leaflet feeding system.”

The creation of its insert feeder, which was rolled out in 2016 and then patented in 2018, also contributed immensely to the company's growth. Then, the OEM went on to develop a semi-automatic case packer in 2017 for serialization systems, which met a demand from customers who didn't need a fully-automatic case packer.

And the company's most recent innovation of a tamper-evident labeler was built based off labeling equipment they've assembled in the past, which helped them speed time-to-market for the pharmaceutical, medical device, nutraceutical, and personal care customers that were working hard to meet demands caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“For the labeler, the tamper-evident aspect was new to us, but we basically took a new labeler and then built standard components around the labeler and that helped us achieve what we were going for,” says Neece.

When it comes to innovating new products or improving existing equipment, Serpa's engineers take what they know about their equipment and how it works, and they improve it and adapt it into standard design modules that they can build upon and customize—much like they did with the leaflet feeders.

Serpa's people are always thinking about ways to make the equipment better in terms of being more functional, easier to use, and having fewer parts. Internally the team uses the term “Serpify” when they are taking on a challenge or thinking about how they can develop a new solution.

“Serpifying describes the level of pride we have in creating this equipment,” Metzler says. “When we have a machine that we build, from the guy that debugged it to the people that designed it, they all have that love and pride of building a Serpa machine that's top quality and that customers love and respect.”

Another trend and industry innovation Serpa is implementing into their systems to keep the company relevant and growing is the concept of magnetic conveyance, like Rockwell's MagneMotion. The OEM has completed systems utilizing magnetic conveyors from Rockwell, which Neece says provides Serpa's customers with more flexibility.

“Those tracks allow us to process either products or cartons at a certain pitch on one part of the machine and with intermittent and continuous motion on another part of the machine,” Neece says. “And to be able to transfer it down to another part of the machine and change the pitch or go intermittent or continuous, that's really a game changer when it comes to having robotics picking and placing in a machine.”

Serpa's role and journey as an integrator

Serpa's product innovations have aided in the company's growth, but being an integrator has also accelerated in its expansion. The OEM started integrating when its customers were purchasing more than one piece of equipment to complete a line, which aligned perfectly with Serpa's mission to develop complete end-of-line solutions.

Over the last decade, Serpa has expanded product lines to include equipment like robotic palletizers so that they can be a one-stop shop for their customer's end-of-line needs and further build their integrator reputation. But the OEM still looks to its peers to partner up on bigger lines.

“When we are looking for an OEM partner on an integration, service is big for us,” Metzler says. “We want to work with OEMs that can match the level of service that we give after the machine is sold. We work with Weiler Labeling a lot and they match our level of service and quality. They have equipment that is top notch, and we don't have to touch anything on it.”

Serpa was founded on making equipment easy to use and maintain while promising 98% uptime, which is why it has strict requirements for service and uptime.

What's next for Serpa

As Serpa finds their place in the ProMach family, it will be important to keep an eye on this company's growth and innovations, some of which the company will show at PACK EXPO Las Vegas happening Sept. 27-29.

“We are working on a collaboration between us and another company that we plan to debut during PACK EXPO,” says Metzler. “It's going to be a really innovative in terms of product handling.”

For more information on exhibiting at PACK EXPO Las Vegas, visit: oemgo.to/pelv

Looking forward, the company plans to improve on its service and continue to expand as it taps into new opportunities provided by the acquisition.

“Now, being a ProMach company, I'm looking at even faster growth in the next three years, which will make it even more stable for my people here in terms of security long-term,” Serpa says. “That's important to me, especially as I look to retire.” ■

Turn to **page 39** for more on PACK EXPO Las Vegas



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IT'S TIME FOR MACHINE BUILDERS TO GET SOCIAL MEDIA SAVVY

Consider these social media content strategies and advertising must-knows to enhance your Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Pinterest presence to gain customers and effectively tell your company's story.

Reported by

Natalie Craig, Managing Editor &
Sarah Loeffler, Director, Media Innovation &
Marketing Insights, PMMI Media Group

The pandemic has forced OEMs to rely on digital communications, which has caused many manufacturers to pay closer attention to their marketing and social media strategies. In a digital world, it's more important than ever to effectively communicate your brand story through social media to engage existing and new customers as well as to attract potential employees who are looking to LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Pinterest, to learn more about prospective companies as they consider their next career move.

More than 3.6 billion people are on social media, which is expected to increase to 4.41 billion in 2025, according to Sprout Social, a social media software company. And right now, social media users spend around 144 minutes on social media every single day.

Check out a detailed breakdown of each social media platform to learn more about user demographics by visiting: oemgo.to/socialmedia

There are many ways to participate in social media as a manufacturer and there are many platforms to engage with. Whether you already have a strong social media presence, or your company is hoping to boost its activity and engage with customers, suppliers, or the present and future



workforces, these best practices will help you identify a strategy so that your company can stay consistent with its social media goals.

Social media best practices for manufacturers

1. Take advantage of social media's strengths.

One of the biggest advantages to becoming more active on social channels is the ability to reach your prospects where they already are consuming media and without email's spam blocking or regulations. There is also an immediacy with social that's difficult to achieve elsewhere, as you have direct insights into your audience's needs and message preferences in ways like no other.

2. Determine your voice, audience, and goals for your company's social media presence. Whether you are embarking on your social media journey or wanting to improve your approach, it's important to have a discussion about your company's mission, the story you want to tell on social media, as well as who you want your audience to be. Having these conversations can help your marketing team create a strong plan for social media that provides you with the results you're looking for, according to Clare Blodgett, CEO, Clarity Marketing and Principal of The Sourced Collective. The Sourced Collective specializes in helping manufacturers find their voice and drive engagement on social media.

"Great brands are built, they're not marketed," Blodgett says. "You build a great brand by having that foundation and an understanding of who you are. Then, having a plan that you're going to consistently execute over time versus just jumping into something without structure, which is a recipe for failure. We encourage manufacturers to start with a really strong and well-articulated brand strategy and that sense of 'who we are.' So now, they have something that they can consistently communicate to their audience through social media."

While it may seem straightforward that your social media audience should be your customer, there may be other people you want to reach on social. Blodgett shares how to narrow in:

"When we engage with a manufacturer, the leadership team has one idea of what they want to see for their marketing, but the salespeople have a different idea of what they want to see, and then marketing may have a different idea, too," Blodgett says. "So, we interview each sales team member and ask them what are your clients asking you for? What are they asking from you? What do they want to see? Do they need to see a video? Do they want to see more photos of the application? They're the ones with boots on the ground so asking the sales team and doing that research will give you a deep understanding of the audience you should be speaking to."

3. Create a content calendar and schedule social media posts. One of the most important factors in growing your social media presence and audience is consistency, Blodgett says. "Hashtags are important to use if they are specific to the people you need to reach, but the biggest audience development tool is posting to your accounts consistently."

Morrison Container Handling Solutions' marketing communications manager Allison Wagner uses a content calendar and other planning tools to make sure Morrison is always present on social media.

"We use platforms like HubSpot, which has been really helpful for us from a social media scheduling perspective," Wagner says. "It will allow you to really build out that content into a calendar. And if you put it to paper and spend two hours every couple of weeks scheduling and laying out your next two weeks of content, it allows you to maintain that presence while not actually taking up too much of your time."

4. Harness the power of video. Morrison Container Handling Solutions has been uploading videos of their equipment running on their own floor for more than 10 years, with some of their videos amassing views near the 100,000 mark. Video content comes naturally for Morrison as it is company policy to shoot video for every single system that leaves their facility because everything they build is highly customized. The Morrison team uses a Canon DSLR camera to shoot these videos, but they also use an iPhone to take videos and edit them in Adobe Premier Pro.

"Within the past year, we are trying to post a couple of times a month, if not more, because we have such a backlog of video content," Wagner says. "We get a lot of calls from people who say they saw our equipment on YouTube and that they need something like it. Because what we do is so custom and unique, YouTube has really allowed us to showcase the array of solutions that we can provide. And it really also serves as inspiration for people to watch and discover what they could need. We see people use YouTube all the time to discover what type of packaging equipment they need. And it just makes sense to be where your customers are at."

5. Keep videos short, but informative. The sweet spot for videos that perform well on YouTube and other social media platforms is under two minutes, according to Jon Nigbor, president of Media 272, a North American B2B video production company.

"People are willing to watch a video one to two minutes," Nigbor says. "You have to be brief while also telling your audience a lot. When you shoot video, you may end up with 10- or 15-minutes' worth of content, which you have to cut down to two minutes. You're only going to use 10% of what you capture, and that's where it may be beneficial to hire a media company to help you organize information and

edit these videos to perform well. Customer success story videos are the most relevant and influential videos. If a company could get their customers to show and tell how their machines work those videos are considerably more effective than a company demonstration video.”

6. Don't limit your presence to “B2B” platforms. Platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook are “ideal” B2B marketing platforms, whereas platforms like Pinterest and Instagram are viewed as more B2C-appropriate. For example, more than 96% of B2B marketers use LinkedIn for organic content distribution, according to Sprout Social. However, as the generational workforce shift in manufacturing occurs, OEMs will need to expand their presence to platforms such as Instagram—which has more than 1 billion active monthly users, with the largest age demographic being 18-24 years old—to reach their customers, as well as attract the incoming workforce, says Blodgett.

“Instagram allows manufacturers to tell their story visually, especially when we're dealing with products,” says Kendal Marsh, a principal at The Sourced Collective. “It's not an official B2B space, but a lot of people are there. Another thing to consider is that platforms like LinkedIn have a ‘nine-to-five nature,’ meaning people check their LinkedIn accounts during business hours. But if you want

to reach audiences around the clock, it needs to be through Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest. And that's where you can still create connection and amplify your brand.”

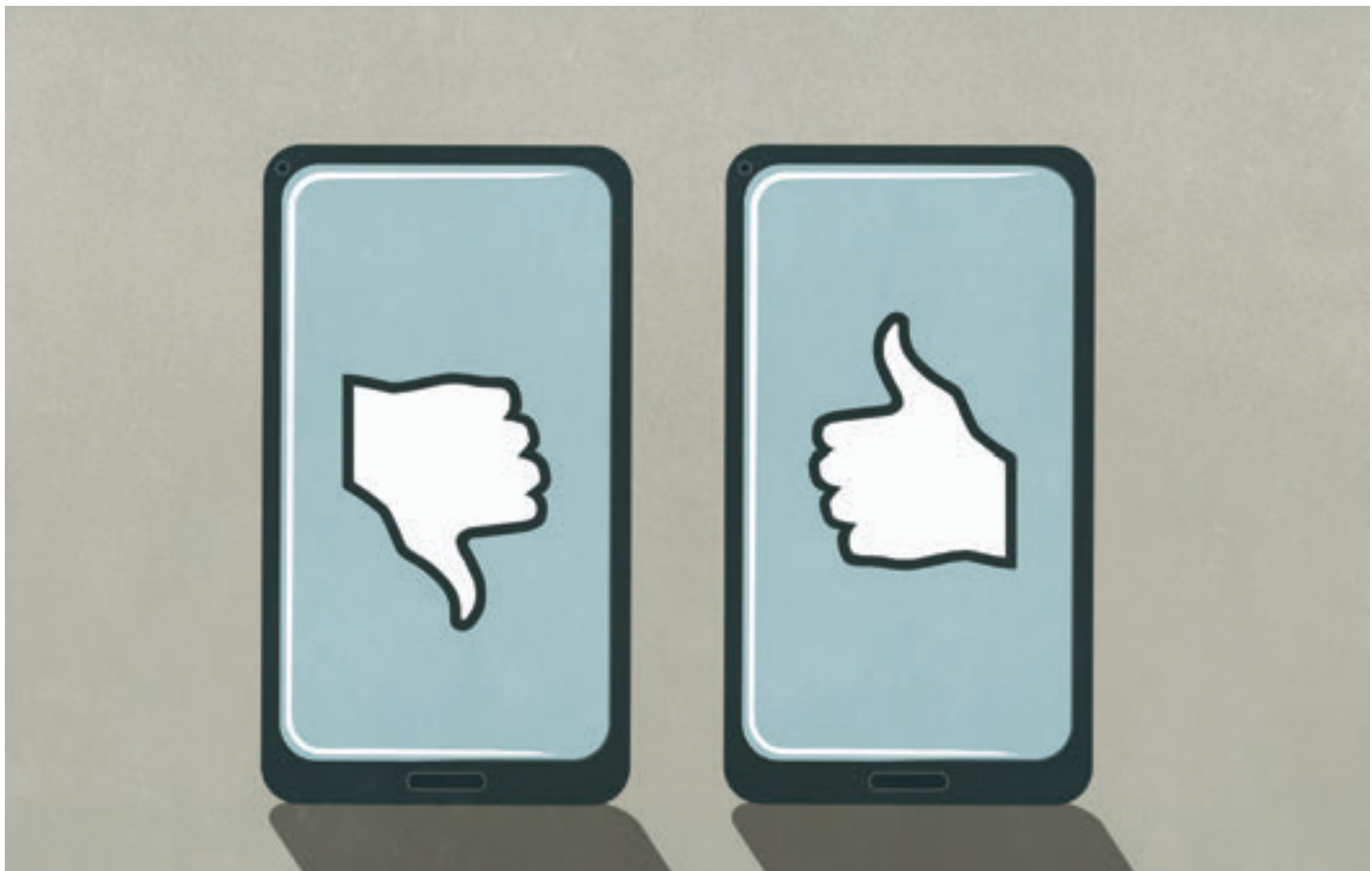
Dorner has found a lot of success on Instagram and Pinterest, according to Stacy Johnson, Dorner's director of marketing and strategic planning.

“We'll see comments on our Instagram posts where people tag other people and say, ‘Hey, check this out,’ or ‘Did you know Dorner does this?’” Johnson says. “Instagram is a growing platform, and we find a lot of success in sharing more informational content, which position us as thought leaders in the industry.”

7. Repurpose content and media to create organic and natural content.

Like Morrison, Dorner also has plenty of videos that they repurpose for YouTube and Instagram, which helps fill their content bucket and stay consistent on their platforms. And since Dorner is on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, and LinkedIn, the marketing team is always thinking of ways to maximize one post for several different platforms.

“It never feels like we're short for content,” says Bridgette Jaeger, Dorner's digital marketing specialist. “A lot of our content is applications we shot on the floor and





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it comes across in a very natural and organic way, which performs very well on social media. Then, we will incorporate the videos from YouTube or our website into a blog, and then we'll put the blog out onto the social media channels, too. And while we will promote the same blog post on all of our channels, we'll change the text for each one. So, LinkedIn will have a little bit of a different message and Instagram and Facebook will have a different message than Twitter."

8. Leverage analytics and insights to find out what performs well.

Most social media platforms have built in analytics and insights that allow manufacturers to see how their posts are performing. This is a great way to see which content resonates with your audience and which types don't.

"You can do A/B testing and use the analytics and insights from your social platforms to decide, "This is getting better impressions, but this is getting better interaction. Let's go with this type of content more often," says Steve Hallblade, sales and marketing director at The Sourced Collective. "And the analytics are really important. It goes beyond seeing if you got X number of clicks. It's about comparing all of your analytics and seeing what works and what doesn't."

9. Go beyond equipment content.

When you're posting to different platforms, try to diversify your content to show different aspects of your company, the services you offer, and the people you work with. While machine videos may perform well for some manufacturers, most people like to see a company's culture, people, and mission shine through in their content.

"We guide people to try to really accentuate their different features, especially when you're in an industry where you can have machinery that looks similar," Blodgett says. "Content that performs very well is not so much about just the machine, but posts that show what your company is like. People are taking into consideration so much more the culture of a company that they're going to engage with and make a major purchase from. And that kind of comes in more with the younger generations."

Considerations for social media advertising

In addition to using social media to reach followers, many marketers are focusing increasingly on advertising using social channels to share content with prospects as well.

Many manufacturers are paying to reach audiences on their social feeds to raise awareness and drive web traffic. According to Sprout Social, more than 83% of B2B marketers found social media advertising to be the second most successful form of advertising for their business just

behind search engine marketing and advertising.

As your team determines where and how to focus its efforts, consider these core efforts for advertising on social media platforms.

1. Have distinct strategies for both organic and paid placements. Creating a company Facebook or LinkedIn page and inviting others to join can be a great way to connect with customers and industry contacts. After all, these "organic" posts cost nothing but your time. That said, posting on your company's page—or even having posts on trade media company pages—won't get you in front of new prospects with much success. To reach those who have yet to know your company, you should consider using paid ads to reach prospects on their feeds.

Audience differences should also be considered when planning your content strategy. Organic posts are a great place for sharing company news, discussing industry trends, and inviting interaction from customers, while paid efforts are a better fit for demand gen activities, such as building brand awareness, driving traffic to your website, and garnering white paper downloads.

2. Consider how the ad will be served when selecting creative. In addition to ensuring your ad meets a social platform's specs, it's also important that it reflects the "goal" that the platform will try to maximize when serving. For example, Facebook and YouTube offer serving to maximize for "awareness" or "consideration" (website visits and engagement). Creative that is focused on pure branding will align well with "awareness," while more click-worthy content, such as ads that focus on a customer pain point or a download offer, will be a better fit for "consideration."

3. Recognize that bad creative can often put a drag on serving performance. If you're thinking of advertising on YouTube, focus on creating videos that people will want to watch through to the end. Obviously, you need prospects to watch the video so they see and receive the value you're offering. If they don't watch to the end of the video, they'll miss out on your offer or message. But just as important, in some instances, if someone clicks on your video and doesn't watch to the end, YouTube may interpret that as a bad viewer experience and will give your video less priority in search and suggested results. Many social platform algorithms operate in similar fashion, prioritizing position and/or frequency by level of ad engagement.

4. Test creative materials. The exciting part about advertising using social media platforms is that it's easy to experiment with different visuals or video cuts, headlines, calls to action and types of placements, with many platforms even supporting easy split testing to optimize performance. Simple changes can often yield significant results.

5. Invest with an eye to achieving the best ROI. Frequent monitoring will also help your team assess ideal duration. A common mistake those new to social media advertising may make is cutting off an ad too soon. Usually, there is an initial period where the social media platform will “learn” how the audience interacts with your ad followed by a period where it begins serving more efficiently to optimize for click throughs, view time, conversions, or reach, depending on the goal selected during set-up. You’ll want to run your ad long enough to be in that sweet spot where you’re maximizing performance with your spend.

6. Keep audience in mind. One strength of social media advertising is the ability for platforms to recognize your customers with just a few pieces of data, such as name and email address or by pixel. Most advertising on social platforms will allow you to upload custom lists of customers. Beware when choosing “lookalike audiences” to these lists, as there is little control over what the platform will deem similar demographics. *Tip: To confirm you’re reaching who you intend to reach, don’t simply run awareness campaigns. Test audience quality by viewing comments and running lead gen ads occasionally as well.*

Also, talk with trade media about social audience options. Some publishers offer ways to reach their audience on social channels in ways you otherwise couldn’t. As an example, OEMs can reach readers of *Packaging World*, *Healthcare Packaging* and other PMMI Media Group brands on Facebook or LinkedIn by



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vertical, job duty, and other criteria. Also, *Packaging World* routinely offers Facebook reach to show registrants in the weeks leading up to and following PACK EXPO.

7. Use caution when advertising around keywords.

Google platform ads, including YouTube, allow you to target audience based around keyword search behavior, which can be very appealing. But this option may be better suited to some businesses than others, and you need to be search engine optimization (SEO) savvy. For example, will “labeling equipment” bring in a beverage manufacturer or someone looking for a device to aid a home organization project? Will “remote automation” bring you industrial automation users, or people who just want to control their iPhone and other personal devices on the same Wi-Fi? (Hint: you’ll likely get a lot of the latter.) It’s easy for a beginner to waste money reaching the wrong eyes.

8. Don’t let personal social media habits drive your decisions. Many people assume LinkedIn will be a better fit for B2B ads than Facebook. After all, LinkedIn is where people go to catch up on work-related news, right? The reality: When you target ads to an identical audience on Facebook and LinkedIn, Facebook will overwhelmingly generate more clicks and shares. The reason is that most individuals spend far more time on Facebook than on LinkedIn. And to-date, Facebook has more powerful data integrations, so it does a better job at matching when given an audience list—it simply has better ability to recognize someone by email or phone number, whether company email or personal email. Always let data be your guide.

9. Don’t have a mismatch between ad and landing page. Ever click on an ad only to be taken to a landing page that seemingly has very little to do with the ad? Such ad and site incongruence will usually lead to page abandonment. To improve the pipeline experience, make sure your ads reflect the landing page’s fonts, color choice, and other visuals. (Tip: If your access to graphic designers is limited, consider using no- or low-cost ad-building tools such as Canva or Visme to customize your ads.) Be sure to use similar language in the ad and on the landing page. Also, be sure not to take visitors to a crowded home page. The less friction between your ad and the landing page in terms of content promised, the greater the likelihood your site visitors will stay.

10. Don’t “set it and forget it.” Social media ad campaign management is an active process, where you’ll need to be monitoring spend, percentage of audience reached, ad performance by key metrics, and message frequency. It’s also important to keep current with platform changes and monitoring performance trends, as ad types and specs, algorithm serving preferences and audience targeting options frequently change. Tip: If your team doesn’t have time

to manage social media advertising, PMMI Media Group offers Facebook and LinkedIn options where its expert staff will oversee copy development and ad management. See: oemgo.to/producthub under the desired brand and search by “Facebook” or “LinkedIn.”

Social media by the numbers

30%

The increase in weekly views that brands see by having complete information associated with their company’s LinkedIn page. Always make sure to include basics, such as your website URL, logo, banner image, industry, company size, and location. Additionally, in your company overview, be sure to include relevant terms and phrases about your purpose and applications. That way when users add keywords in their search engine or on LinkedIn, your brand will come up in the results.

80%

Average percentage of Facebook users who use only mobile to access their feeds. The takeaway? Always make sure your ads look good on mobile and not just desktop. And avoid hard-to-read text on your videos, so users with smaller screens can still get the full experience.

2X

How much higher the comment rate is for LinkedIn posts that include images. Take the extra few seconds to find a photo, stock image, or some nice typography—prospect engagement depends on it.

60

The maximum number of minutes customers expect business to respond on social media channels, according to a HubSpot study. Customer service is no longer limited to call centers, contact forms and other traditional touch points. Keep an eye on your Twitter account, as 80% of social customer care inquiries start on the platform.

2

YouTube’s rank by traffic of all websites. According to Amazon Alexa’s top sites, YouTube generates the second most traffic of all websites in the world, second only to Google—which also owns YouTube, according to Sprout Social. Establishing or maintaining a presence on YouTube can help marketers stay competitive with other brands and ensure they have a presence on the biggest platforms.

Source: Sprout Social

Scan this QR code with your smartphone to follow *OEM Magazine* on social media.





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Lock the Back Door to Keep Cyber-criminals Out

FROM BUILDING A CYBERSECURITY STRATEGY TO USING TECHNOLOGY THAT BLOCKS BAD ACTORS FROM SNEAKING IN THROUGH A REMOTE ACCESS CONNECTION, OEMS HAVE NEW WAYS TO PROTECT THEMSELVES AND THEIR CUSTOMERS.

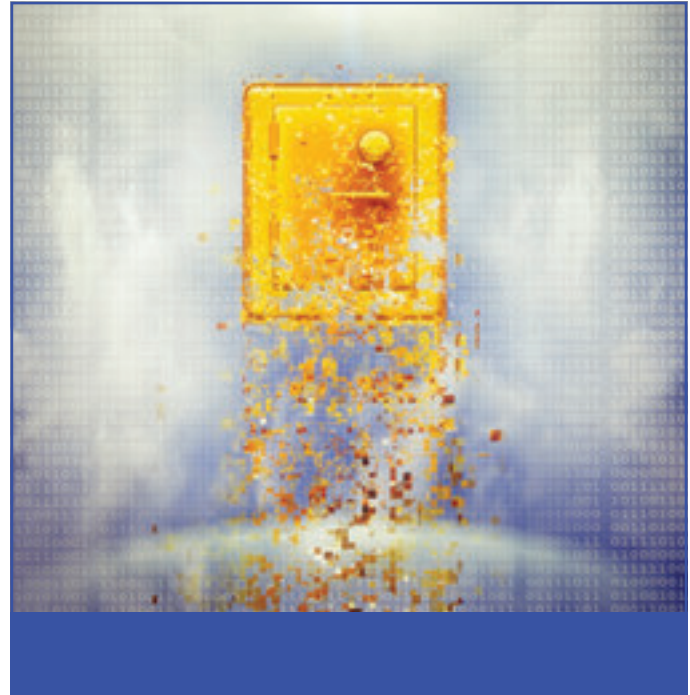
Stephanie Neil, Editor-in-Chief

While cybersecurity has always been a concern for business, since the pandemic cyberattacks are on the rise, according to the Ransomware Task Force (RTF), an international coalition of experts formed to combat ransomware criminals. We can see the effects of cyber sabotage with the hack on a water treatment plant in Florida back in February, and the more recent shutdown of the Colonial Pipeline due to a ransomware threat.

But cybercriminals are not just targeting critical infrastructure—every single business can fall victim to these malicious acts.

As more manufacturers are letting technology partners and machine builders connect to systems through a remote access point, there are more ways for cybercriminals to sneak in and wreak havoc on a company, be it deleting important data or shutting down production unless a ransom is paid. This is causing concern for manufacturers that are using machines from many different OEMs.

For example, Cargill is a global manufacturer with facilities in 70 countries. “We have so many OEMs that we mostly deal with at the local level,” says Dominic de Kerf, Cargill’s smart manufacturing expert focused on automation, instrumentation, and process control. “They know a lot about their machines, but cybersecurity is not some-



thing they do well.”

And every supplier has a different remote access method, making the management of securing who is coming through an opening into the plant an IT nightmare. “We can open a secure connection, but it’s complicated,” de Kerf says. “We need some control and accountability.”

The concern was so great for de Kerf that when asked to join a remote access workgroup within the Organization for Machine Automation and Control (OMAC), he gladly accepted. Over five months, the group, comprised of representative from major manufacturing companies, OEMs, system integrators, and automation vendors, worked on outlining a seven step process for creating a comprehensive remote access plan that includes a careful assessment of security, corporate policy, usage, and monitoring requirements.

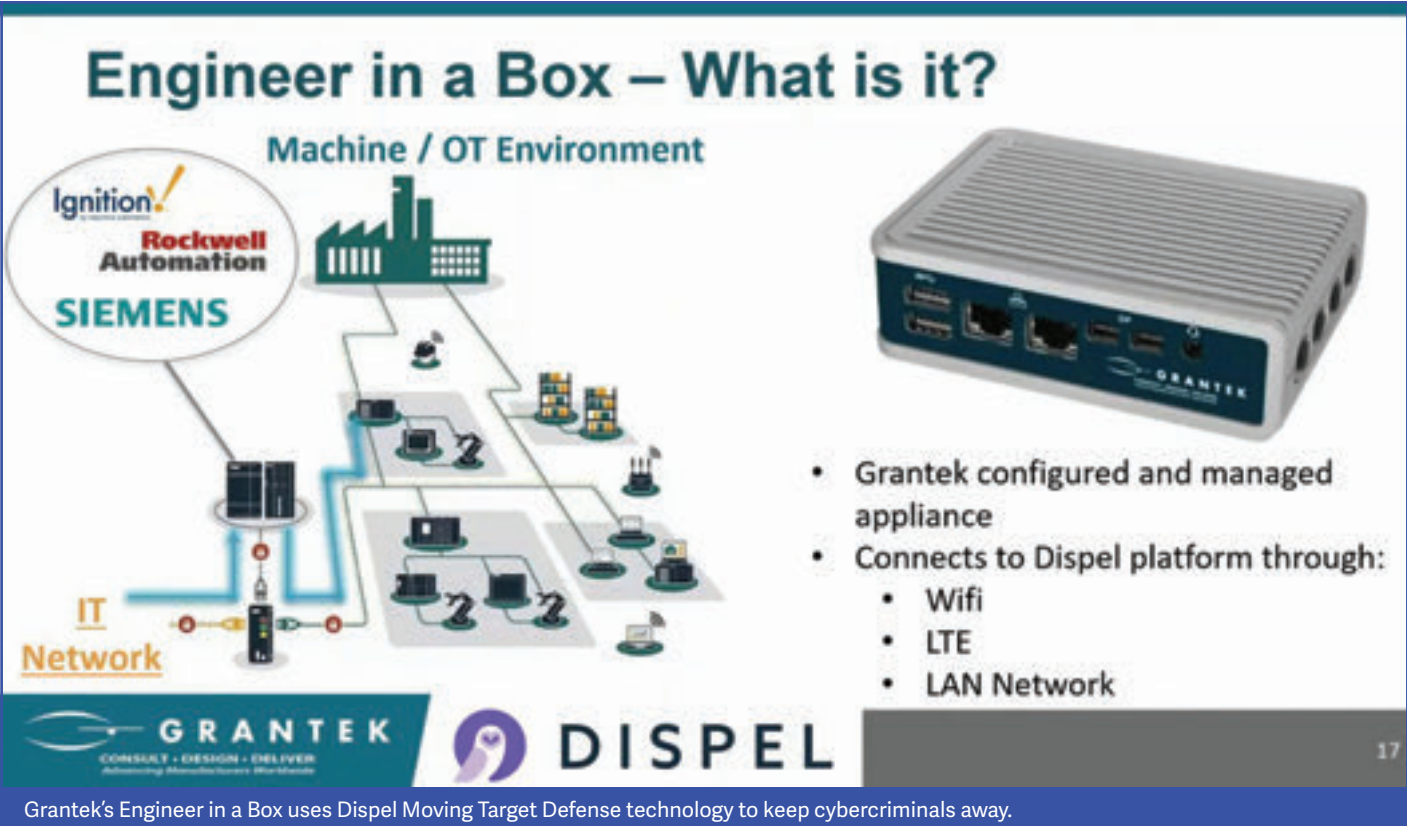
New resources to build a cybersecurity strategy

The result is the *Practical Guide for Remote Access to Plant Equipment* which was released in January 2021 and details best practices used in manufacturing to define, analyze, control, improve, and secure remote access.

To access OMAC’s *Practical Guide to Remote Access to Plant Equipment* go to: oemgo.to/omacremote

The OMAC workgroup was facilitated by ei3, a provider of technology used to increase machine performance and secure remote connections. The company brought in Mark Fondl, founder of consulting firm ICT Global, to lead the project.

Engineer in a Box – What is it?



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Automation
SIEMENS

IT
Network

GRANTEK
CONSULT • DESIGN • DELIVER
Advancing Manufacturers' Workflows

DISPEL

- Grantek configured and managed appliance
- Connects to Dispel platform through:
 - Wifi
 - LTE
 - LAN Network

17

Grantek's Engineer in a Box uses Dispel Moving Target Defense technology to keep cybercriminals away.

“I wanted to get the perspective of an entire ecosystem and develop topics and areas of discussion that are not so technical, but the goal was to develop common sense practical points of view that anyone can use,” Fondl says. “The target was not major corporations, but middle and smaller-sized manufacturing plants that may not have the experience but are looking for guidance in regard to remote access.”

Fondl recruited big CPGs, including Cargill, Frito-Lay, and P&G, as well as OEMs like ITW Hartness, Durr USA, Milacron, Mettler Toledo, Nordson, and ProMach. He also brought in technology suppliers Beckhoff Automation, Mitsubishi Electric Europe, SICK, Siemens, and of course, ei3, as well as many system integrators and associations like PMMI.

The 90-page guide, which is vendor agnostic, goes through specific steps to consider taking to safeguard a facility, focusing a lot on processes and terminology—especially between IT and OT departments—because although they may use the same words, they often have different meanings.

“I created a fish tank analogy when talking about IT and OT,” Fondl says. “They’re like two fish tanks, one fresh water and one salt water. To the outside observer they look to be the same, but if you live in one and are moved to the other, the subtle differences can kill you.”

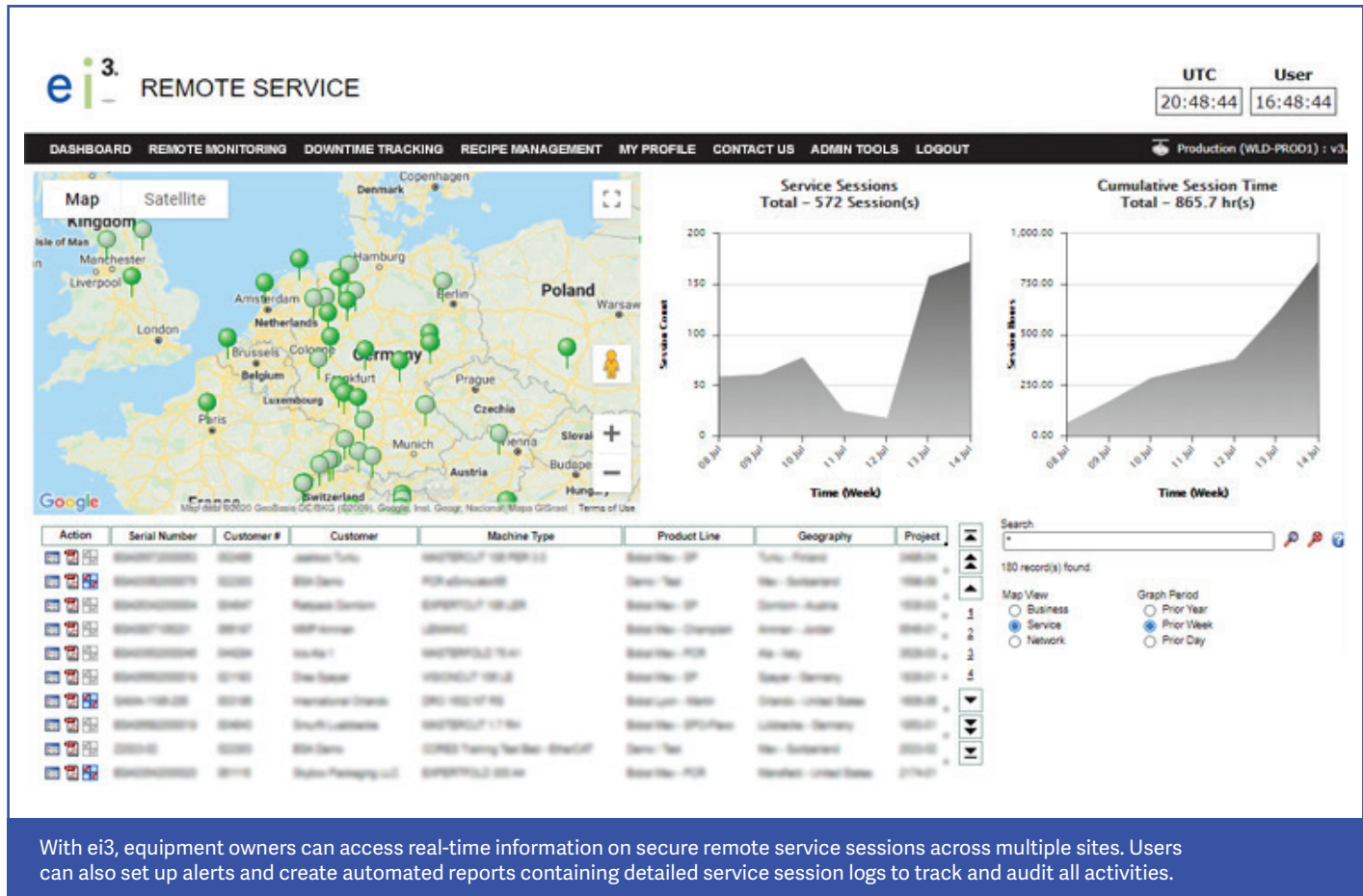
In fact, data from a 2020 survey of CPGs conducted by PMMI and published as a Business Intelligence report

called *Trends in Adoption of Remote Access*, noted cybersecurity as the top concern of remote access, followed close behind by organizational IT/OT barriers. According to the report, respondents were also concerned that there was no practical guide to help start the process of adding new remote services. Well, now there is.

In addition, PMMI followed up with its own guide to developing a cybersecurity strategy. The *2021 Cybersecurity: Assess Your Risk* document published in March complements the OMAC document by addressing modern cyber threats—including ransomware—as well as Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT) vulnerabilities related to digital transformation and connectivity. It looks at assessing inside threats as well as cloud service providers, cybersecurity insurance, ways to mitigate risk, and more.

The PMMI cybersecurity report also zeroed in on what OEMs need to pay specific attention to, noting that machine builders are highly vulnerable to cyberattacks, and are often seen by cybercriminals as a bridge to reach other targets. Therefore, machine builders will need to take extra precautions to safeguard their data as well as their customers’ data. To that end, the report recommends that OEMs partner with a third-party expert to craft a comprehensive plan as well as implement damage-mitigation measures should a data breach occur.

Download PMMI’s 2021 Cybersecurity report: oemgo.to/cybersecurity2021



And that raises the question: Who is ultimately responsible when there is a security breach?

“At the end of the day, the manufacturer is ultimately responsible, but whoever is developing the platform is responsible for making sure it is deployed in a secure way,” says Jacob Chapman, director of industrial IT and cybersecurity at Grantek, a systems integrator focused on the food and beverage, CPG, and pharmaceutical industries.

Pandemic sparks new ideas for securing the plant

Chapman worked on the OMAC guide, which he says is meant to walk IT and OT stakeholders through what they should know when navigating remote access. But, because it is vendor agnostic, it does not dive into the technologies available that are specifically designed to protect remote access connections.

And yet, there are many technology innovations in the area of remote access cybersecurity. Here are just a few:

Grantek’s Engineer in a Box. When COVID-19 limited OEM and vendor access to equipment and controls at their customers’ facilities, Grantek rolled out its Engineer-in-a-Box, a remote access mobile device powered by Dispel’s Moving Target Defense technology. It’s a plug-and-play appliance that provides secure remote access to industrial

control systems (ICS). To use, it just needs to connect to an Ethernet port anywhere on an OT network. To disconnect, just turn it off.

It is the **Dispel Moving Target Defense** technology that creates a very different set up which flips the model of the traditional static defense system. “Rather than having a static target, like a castle that adversaries are trying to hit, we build submarines that move and keep assets safe because they can’t see where they went,” says Ben Burke, COO of Dispel. “It’s a cycling virtual infrastructure.”

According to Burke, a traditional on premise system may have several steps to connect through the firewall, but it is basically a beacon beckoning all to connect. “What’s different about the moving target defense is we push the connection entry point to the cloud and shift it over time, so you are not directly connecting to the OT environment. When you first connect, you have to go through our cloud infrastructure before getting there.”

The on premise gateway establishes an encrypted tunnel to the cloud network. Once that half of the bridge is built, the virtual desktop gets the user profile and connects to the other side of the network. The two come together to create a temporary bridge through which the user can access the encrypted tunnel through the gateway and firewall and then to the specific OT endpoint. This infrastructure



cycles over time so that OT has a new virtual desktop with each log-in. “For an adversary, every day the entire user profile has completely changed. There is no methodology for performing reconnaissance on it,” Burke says.

ei3’s Amphion Edge Devices. Using industry standard security protocols it creates a managed secure network from the machine to ei3’s application in the cloud. “We are looking after the network, constantly patching and monitoring all aspects of our managed VPN,” says ei3 founder Spencer Cramer, noting “If you just put a VPN appliance on a machine and you are not updating it, that VPN appliance will quickly become a vulnerability to the organization.”

In addition to managing the security of the access point, ei3 controls the access of individuals. If an organization owns equipment from many different OEMs and uses services from different integrators, consultants, and even employees working from home, it’s not reasonable to open that equipment to everyone. “With the ei3 cloud security center, we give the owner of the equipment the ability to control the access to the equipment. They can create a temporary one-time link to open a door for a single person to access a single piece of equipment, and it’s all done through web pages, so no software or firewall configuration is needed. It’s done in a way that a plant manager or line supervisor can ask for support and once it’s done, that door closes and locks.”

The ei3 technology works with any type of industrial automation controls and networks, including legacy protocols. “This is an important point because you can find hundreds of companies that will help you connect to brand new equipment, but ei3 can help you with 15-year-old equipment,” Cramer says.

Claroty’s Secure Remote Access and Continuous Threat Detection. The Claroty platform offers an OT security system with remote incident management that spans the entire incident lifecycle, allowing cybersecurity teams to detect, investigate, and respond to incidents on OT networks across the broadest attack surface area securely and seamlessly from any location.

The tool itself is on the network and profiles all assets, communications, and processes to establish a behavioral baseline that characterizes legitimate traffic while providing continuous integrity monitoring. When a user receives an alert from the continuous threat detection, the platform

utilizes information from similar events to provide context enabling a more effective response. “It detects every risk to the network and every threat that might come up,” says Guilad Regev, Claroty’s senior vice president of global customer success. It also has the ability to disconnect potentially harmful remote sessions.

FDT 3.0. The FDT Group, a not-for-profit industry association supporting the field device tool technology, which defines the data exchange interface between field devices and each control system and engineering or asset management tools, rolled out FDT 3.0 last June, which included the FDT IIoT Server (FITS) and FDT 3.0 Developer Toolkits. Part of the server upgrade includes enabling remote access, allowing someone to check on a facility wherever they are as long as there are security protocols that will allow it.

“We had a separate security team guiding the security aspects of the standard,” says Glenn Schulz, managing director of FDT Group, noting that security protocols are built-in to the standard. “But what it is allowed to do is up to the end users’ IT or OT departments in terms of how they choose to configure it.”

People play a role

While technology may be the front line—or maybe the backdoor defense—nothing will be completely successful unless everyone is working from the same playbook. According to the PMMI report, “The best cybersecurity plan is only as good as the individuals tasked with carrying it out.” This may mean creating a dedicated cybersecurity team that crosses IT and OT departments, in addition to partnering with an expert, as previously stated.

The PMMI report and OMAC reports, however, are the best places to start the conversation.

“[The OMAC guide] created context I could share with people to be sure they know the problem and the process,” de Kerf says. “The biggest value to me is that it proves to others at Cargill that this is not as easy as some make it sound. There is no magic bullet or simple solution and we won’t solve this problem next week, but at least we have context and a [reference] for OEMs.”

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ASSOCIATION NEWS



Sean Riley, Senior Director, Media & Industry Communications, PMMI

Important Next Steps for PMMI ProSource

The countdown is on. The PMMI ProSource member directory is expected to launch this August, and it's critical that the platform showcases your company's most up-to-date information. To collect this data, we created an easy-to-use member portal that streamlines how you tell PMMI—and ultimately, your customers—what your company does.

In May, you should have received an email from PMMI with a link to set up your username and password on the PMMI Member Portal. Please access the link in that email and visit portal.pmmi.org to submit three key sections:

- Company information (company website and email, brief description, service and support, etc.)
- Product categories (for fastest and best results, we recommend filling out this section together with a colleague who has technical knowledge of your products)
- Vertical markets

You can log in and update your company's information at any time. Please note that if you don't fill out the three sections completely, it will be much harder for customers to find you via PMMI ProSource, but you'll still be listed in the directory.

Contact prosource@pmmi.org with questions.



Nominate Your Rising Leaders

Do you have a young professional in your company displaying extraordinary leadership qualities? Recognize this individual's achievements by nominating them for PMMI's

On the Rise Awards, produced by the Emerging Leaders Network.

The program allows young professionals to further their professional development in packaging and processing, meet others in the industry, and learn more about PMMI.

Nomination criteria:

- Must be 35 years old or younger by July 30, 2021.
- Employed by a PMMI member company for at least one year.
- List three examples of how nominee impacted your business—i.e. improved processes, increased sales, creation of a new program, etc. These achievements can benefit any department of your company, from sales and marketing to engineering and more.
- List an example of how your nominee is furthering his/her career through professional development.

Winners will be honored at the PMMI 2021 Annual Meeting on Nov. 8-10 in Detroit and will receive complimentary airfare, registration, and hotel stay. The winter issue of OEM magazine will also feature the winners.

Check out last year's On the Rise Award winners and nominate your rising leader by July 30 at: oemgo.to/ontherise



MaX Member Forum

PMMI Manufacturing Excellence (MaX) is a collaborative Member Forum driving efficiencies and streamlining operations by sharing best practices for optimizing business, convening share groups to discuss best practices, and developing focused training to improve operations. PMMI members can participate in share groups and help develop industry solutions in three key areas: sales and marketing, field service, and engineering and operations.

Download MaX Member Forum's first solution, *Pandemic Policies for Field Service Personnel* by visiting: oemgo.to/customertools

Contact Bryan Griffen, PMMI's director of Industry Services, at bgriffen@pmmi.org to participate in the forum.

PMMI U Tech Ed 365 Online Courses Now Available

PMMI U's online technical training courses provide consistent and repeatable content that is convenient and affordable and tailored to the packaging and processing industries. These courses serve those new to the industry and as an excellent refresher for seasoned employees. Course topics include Basic Electrical Components, Basic Mechanical Components, Introduction to Packaging Machinery, and Troubleshooting Packaging Machinery.

Find out more at: oemgo.to/teched365

Close the Growing Skills Gap

It's easier than ever to invest in the skills of your employees and students with the PMMI U Skills Fund. PMMI will match your company's contributions up to \$10,000 per year for work-related, multi-employee training and up to \$50,000 per year to support the regional education programs of your choice.

Apply today at: oemgo.to/skillsfund



New Cyber Insurance & Risk Mitigation Offering for PMMI Members

PMMI has partnered to bring its members an innovative and comprehensive solution to help manage, mitigate, respond to and recover from cyberattacks. Through a partnership with the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), PMMI is now offering a cyber insurance and risk management product designed specifically for manufacturers and their needs – NAM Cyber Cover.

Find out how vulnerable your organization is to a cyberattack with a complimentary Cyber Risk Assessment at: oemgo.to/nampmmi

For more information, contact George Forrester, SVP, Shareholder, Manufacturing Practice Leader – AHT at: gforrester@ahtins.com or at 703 623 4623

Tuition Reimbursement Available for Members

The PMMI Foundation established the Tuition Reimbursement program to encourage and support the efforts of individuals furthering their education. Individuals who work for a PMMI member company can apply for reimbursement of up to \$1,000 per job-related course. Each member company is eligible for two reimbursements for two different employees per year, not to exceed \$1,000 per course. PMMI educational offerings qualify for tuition reimbursement.

Find out more at: oemgo.to/tuition

Planning a Career Fair?

There are endless opportunities and roles in packaging and processing, from engineers to designers to technicians. With our new Career Fair Promotion 101 Guide, PMMI makes it easier than ever to find your next great employee—whether virtually or in-person. Including a pre-made customizable postcard, poster, PowerPoint, social media graphics, and email banners, this easy-to-use guide will help streamline your marketing efforts.

Download for free at: oemgo.to/careerfair

New Spring Class of Members

PMMI added 23 new companies this spring at its Board of Directors Meeting during the Executive Leadership Conference. Active membership now stands at 947.

The Board of Directors also modified some qualifications for certain members. Materials Suppliers now only need annual sales of \$3 million in order to qualify for membership—down from \$10 million. The Affiliated Supplier Membership also added the following product categories:

- Container Engineering and Design
- Product Heating and Steam Equipment
- Lubricants
- Transportation, Logistics, Software, and Warehouse Service Providers

PMMI new members:

GENERAL

- Allied Technology, Broomfield, Colo.
- Brother USA Machinery LLC, Houston, Texas
- EAM-Mosca Corp., Hazel Township, Pa.
- EMS Group USA, Safety Harbor, Fla.
- IMPAK Corporation, Los Angeles, Calif.
- JMP Solutions, London, Ontario, Canada
- Paxiom Group Inc., Las Vegas, Nev.
- SideDrive Conveyor Co., Souderton, Pa.
- Spec Engineering, Plainfield, Ill.
- VMek Group LLC, Midlothian, Va.

ASSOCIATE

- Fette Compacting, Inc., Rockaway, N.J.
- Verbruggen Palletizing Solutions Inc., Pasco, Wash.

AFFILIATED SUPPLIER

- Inficon, East Syracuse, N.Y.

COMPONENT SUPPLIER

- Ashworth Bros., Inc., Winchester, Va.
- Genesis Robotics and Motion Technologies, Langley, British Columbia
- M.R Machine Knives Ltd., Sheffield, UK
- Weidmuller, USA, Richmond, Va.

MATERIALS SUPPLIER

- Airguard Packaging, Grand Prairie, Texas
- Chicago Glue & Machine, Itasca, Ill.
- ICPG, Putnam, Conn.
- Novembal, Peoria, Ariz.
- Pemcor Packaging, Spring Valley, Calif.
- Polyplex USA, LLC., Decatur, Ala.



Key PACK EXPO Las Vegas and Healthcare Packaging EXPO Exhibitor Deadlines

- July 12: Early Bird Carpet Discount Deadline
- July 30: Approve Company Data for Show Directory
- Aug. 9: PACK EXPO Services Discount Deadline - *Place and pay for any orders through PACK EXPO Services by this date to save up to 30% on most items*
- Aug. 9: Exhibitor Appointed Contractor (EAC) Registration Deadline
- Aug. 27: Exhibitor Hotel Room Block Cut Off
- Aug. 27: Exhibitor Badge Registration & Mailing Deadline - *In an effort to get as many badges mailed in advance to all show participants, Show Management is requiring that all exhibitor personnel be registered by no later than Aug. 27. For this year only, the badge allotment criteria has been lifted and there will be no charge for additional badges beyond your allotment. Any exhibitor registration that occurs after Aug. 27 will incur a \$15 fee.*
- Sept. 10: Hotel Room Reservation Deadline



- Sept. 10: Last Day for Customers to Use Comp Codes to Receive Badges in the Mail for Contactless Entry On-site
- Sept. 21: Move-In Begins
- Sept. 27: Show Opens
- Sept. 29: Show Closes

For more information about exhibiting at PACK EXPO Las Vegas, visit: oemgo.to/pelv



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Sept. 27-28, 2021 at PACK EXPO Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV

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EXHIBITOR'S CORNER

Preparing for Necessary Return of In-Person Events

Meredith Newman, Director,
Exhibitor Services, PMMI

PMMI's Board of Directors voted unanimously to move forward with PACK EXPO Las Vegas and Healthcare Packaging EXPO during their spring meeting in April.

The Board met just before PMMI's 2021 Executive Leadership Conference (ELC), spending significant time during a four-hour Board meeting discussing the fall show. The discussion reinforced the packaging and processing industry's desire to come together in person. As exhibitors at PACK EXPO and Healthcare Packaging EXPO themselves, they recognized that while things could change, current trends are mostly positive and point to a safe and productive industry event.

With its *PACK Ready* health and safety program, PACK EXPO Las Vegas and Healthcare Packaging EXPO will reunite the packaging and processing community, implementing thorough and up-to-date protocols to ensure our exhibitors and attendees can connect, learn, and do business effectively, safely, and with confidence.

What does this mean for exhibitors?

The Exhibitor Services Manual for PACK EXPO Las Vegas and Healthcare Packaging EXPO was released in early June. PMMI will communicate regularly with exhibitors regarding the latest guidelines and best practices based on the government regulations and industry standards. Even as the current regulations change and evolve, exhibitors can start planning their exhibit taking into consideration that attendees and booth staff will expect clean, open spaces to allow for comfortable interaction and productive discussions.

Current industry recommendations include:

- Open booth design to create comfortable space and limit crowding
- Allow clear and open entry and exit points



- Clean machines and high touch surfaces multiple times throughout the day
- Utilize seating to allow adequate distancing and limit seating in meeting rooms to avoid over-crowding
- Consider touchless (electronic and digital) alternatives to engagement
- Provide hand sanitizer in your booth
- Account for personal protective equipment (PPE) apparel as needed (e.g., staff masks, etc.)
- Incorporate signage promoting health and safety best practices
- Utilize your Exhibitor Dashboard to schedule appointments in advance

Attendee registration is now open, and your customers are beginning to plan their visit to the show. Be sure to update your Online Showroom with the products and services you want attendees to see from your company.

For the latest information on planning and promoting your presence at PACK EXPO Las Vegas and Healthcare Packaging EXPO and accessing your Exhibitor Dashboard to make updates to your listing, be sure to visit the Exhibitor Resource Center online at oemgo.to/exhibitorresource

For the latest developments on our Health and Safety plan, visit: oemgo.to/packready

If you are interested in exhibiting, contact the PMMI Show Department at 571-612-3200 or expo@pmmi.org.

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VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER



Brands, Co-Packers Contemplate the Role of OEMs During COVID-19

These CPGs are asking machine builders for clear communication as they maneuver a new supply chain, new material and consumer demands, and a new workforce.

Stephanie Neil, Editor-in-Chief

The PMMI virtual Executive Leadership Conference (ELC) in April brought together three representatives from CPG companies who shared their experiences on the manufacturing and packaging floor during the pandemic, while offering advice to OEMs on how to help with their future needs.

The panel, moderated by *Packaging World* editor Matt Reynolds, included:

Lisa Rathburn, vice president of engineering and continuous improvement for T. Marzetti Company, which makes products for both retail and restaurants, and is in the midst of major expansion projects across several plants, adding nine manufacturing lines in a 12-month period.

Mark Mikol, senior director at Schwan's Company which, now an affiliate of South Korea-based CJ CheilJedang (CJ Food, Americas), is also in expansion mode which includes building state-of-the-art production and packaging facilities with an investment in automation.

And Rick Rice, a controls engineer at Crest Foods Co., Inc., a manufacturer of consumer products with a global dairy stabilizer business, which also has a large contract packaging division.

The conversation touched on the typical hot topics of remote access, managing inventory during supply chain disruptions, and virtual factory acceptance tests (FATs). But the panel also made a plea for more machine flexibility



Rick Rice, controls engineer, Crest Foods



Mark Mikol, senior director, Schwan Food Co.

in order to handle different packaging materials, as well as help training the next generation workforce on existing machines, and, in general, just more transparency.

As an example, at T. Marzetti, there was a simple component needed for a control panel which is normally in stock, but this time around it was not available due to supply chain disruptions related to the pandemic. That resulted in engineers trying to connect across regions and with different distributors, working together to find out where they could source the component. "One of the things we're trying to do is broaden our understanding of where there are limits in the equipment supply chain," Rathburn said. "Our ask is for communication, so that we're aware of any constraints early on. As OEMs start to see constraints in their

supply, I'd like them to communicate it to us as customers so that we can plan around it."

Supply chain disruptions also had a major impact on the materials side. "We've had a lot of material changes because of shortages, so as we're thinking about new equipment we want that equipment to be flexible, and to be able to run slightly different specs of materials," said Schwan's Mikol. "So that's one thing for the OEMs to keep in mind that was really highlighted to me as supply issues came in. If the board can be a little bit weaker, a little bit different type of grade or some other things, it's important to make sure that your equipment is flexible enough to handle that."

Managing equipment, materials, and FATs

In response to the CPGs' requests for more equipment flexibility related to materials, an ELC audience member asked if the panelists ever discuss material changes with machinery OEMs? And, do they provide machine builders with material to test before moving into production?

As a former machine builder who moved to the end user side at Crest Foods, Rice acknowledged that the most frustrating thing about starting out a new project as an OEM is not knowing what material the machine will run. "You get three-quarters of the way doing your build and then find out, 'Oh yeah, and we use metalized film,' or 'we use reflective film,' and it really throws a wrench in the system."

Now, as a CPG and co-packer who is buying that equipment, Rice has leveraged his relationship with some of the OEMs that he's worked with—or for—in the past, and there's many conversations to be had around machine capabilities. Such as, "Your brochure says this, but what will it really do?"

"It's not that we're trying to push the envelope. As a co-packer, our run rules change all the time," Rice said. "We've got a couple of [clients] who are really innovative and they will change up packaging in midstream. They'll want to make a box with a rounded edge on it instead of a standard box. How do we not have a machine that was used for a particular product run and then just set it aside and never use it again? So flexibility is very important. And because of the changes in the individual pouch and materials for pouching lately, we want to have conversations about what else could it potentially run, and what would it take to change your machine to suit the new packaging trends that are coming?"

Mikol echoes the need for equipment flexibility due to material changes and shortages, but notes it's a good conversation to have with OEMs during the design phase as well as the factory acceptance test (FAT). "As to the learning

here with COVID-19 and other things, I think we may bring more than one material to future FATs, just to have some understanding of what the limits are of the equipment. It just depends, too, on coordination and location. We have frozen products, which sometimes are challenging to send overseas. So, how do you test those? And then materials as well. Overseas cartons are different than North American cartons, and all those types of things."

OEMs were also curious to know if the virtual FATs from the past year have translated into successful site acceptance tests (SATs). The answer: It depends on the sophistication of the machine and the people involved.

"Regardless of whether an FAT is virtual or in-person, if the FAT is for a technology that we're familiar with, the project carries a lower risk, and the startup post-FAT typically goes a lot more smoothly," said Rathburn. "If the technology is new to us, then having plant people physically present at an FAT to learn alongside the technicians would be better than trying to conduct it virtually. Because

we know we can't replicate our production in the machine shop environment, there will always be start up activities that we're going to have to learn and work through in our plants. Because of this, I don't think we will switch to doing all FATs virtually going forward; there may be some, but I think our decision will be based on how complicated the technology is for us, and if we have done it before."

Rice adds that Crest Foods has sent non-technical people to the virtual FAT due to the shortage of skilled technicians available, thinking they could do the same kind of walkaround as an experienced tech would do.

But it didn't work as well. "Somebody who's non-technical doesn't look at a machine like the people who are actually going to work on it, or fix it, or run it, and it wasn't as successful for us," he said.

People impact the process

Just as Rice mentioned, having the right level of technical expertise is important to the success of any project. So having the right skillset on staff is needed with the increasing complexity of machines, and constantly changing consumer requirements. With that in mind, *Packaging World's* Reynolds asked the panel how they address employee training, and how can OEMs help out in that regard?

For many CPGs, Crest Foods included, there is a workforce that has been using the same packaging machines for 35 years, but now the people, and maybe even the machines, are retiring. "Suddenly, we realize we're putting people in front of machines that really don't have the core understanding of them," Rice said. "I think we are going to



Lisa Rathburn, VP engineering & continuous improvement, T. Marzetti

have to re-engage OEMs and bring them back to the table.”

That re-engagement may be in the form of virtual training. “Virtual allows for you to not cut out a slice of the day and say, ‘Here’s when the training’s going to be,’ and take those people away from their regular jobs that they’re doing,” Rice said. “Virtual will, much like streaming services on TV, allow you to engage when you want to engage. And yes, OEMs are going to be a big part of that, and it starts with a mindset change at the CPG level.”

Rathburn agreed that OEMs play an important role in training the workforce of the future. “At Marzetti, our mission statement is to ‘nourish growth with all that we do’, which includes the growth of the employees, by developing them and giving them time to do training,” she said. “The harder part is developing training for troubleshooting the unexpected. How do you teach people to troubleshoot under the pressure of daily production? This is where I think the OEMs can help. They teach their field technicians to troubleshoot, and perhaps there is some better methodology, other than reading a manual, that could be leveraged by our plant operations and maintenance teams.”

OEMs can also benefit from providing energy-saving equipment or offering other types of services, which CPGs will pay for. “If the business case plays out, we’ll pay for it,” said Mikol. But if a service requires remote access, there’s

still challenges to overcome, specifically around infrastructure. “At Schwan’s, we are notorious for adding a little bit every year, and as you do that it’s really not all tied together. So, as we’re looking to expand, especially our big plants, we’re looking to have it all connected. I think that the challenging thing always is how do you control that connection from the outside, and how do you give access and all those types of things. So, we’re in the process of working that.”

Amid all of the talk about remote access, virtual FATs, and virtual training, when asked about attending PACK EXPO Las Vegas in September, the panel agreed that in-person is the best approach to such a big event.

“We can’t wait to get back,” said Mikol. “I think with people now getting vaccinated and wearing masks and those types of things, we’re looking forward to seeing a show and actually talking to people live, and looking at new technology.”

“I’m big on in-person as well,” echoed Rice. “As an OEM, I was attending the shows all the time and it was a great time to network with other people. As it is, certainly, as a CPG. If I get to leave the plant, then I can solely focus on being with the OEMs and truly getting into what’s good for us and what’s good for our future.”

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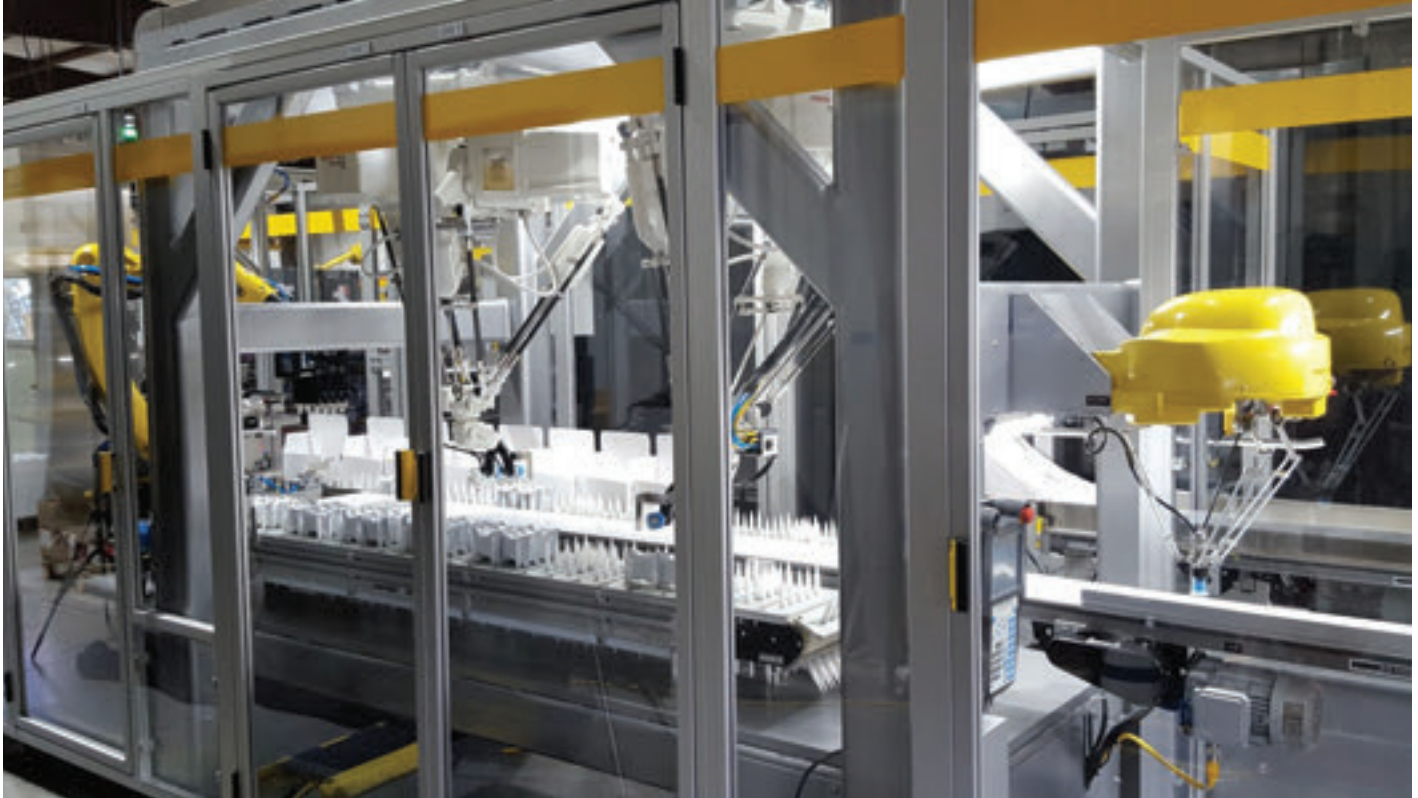
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APPLICATION BRIEF



ESS Technologies supplied three Model VC30 cartoners to create a complete COVID-19 test kit packaging line.

COVID-19 Test Kit Cartoning Line Increased Productivity to Meet Urgent Testing Needs

ESS Technologies supplied three Model VC30 cartoners to create a complete COVID-19 test kit packaging line, increasing the manufacturer's production capacity.

As the coronavirus pandemic widened in 2020, a major manufacturer of fast-response COVID-19 test kits enlisted ESS Technologies to design and build a cartoning line to automate the packaging of pouched test kits.

By integrating a variety of FANUC robots with ESS-engineered automation, ESS designed and delivered three Model VC30 cartoning systems in a fraction of the normal

delivery time. The equipment increased production efficiency and OEE, and automating the process allowed the manufacturer to re-assign valuable human resources to important functions not suitable for automation.

The robotic cartoning solution

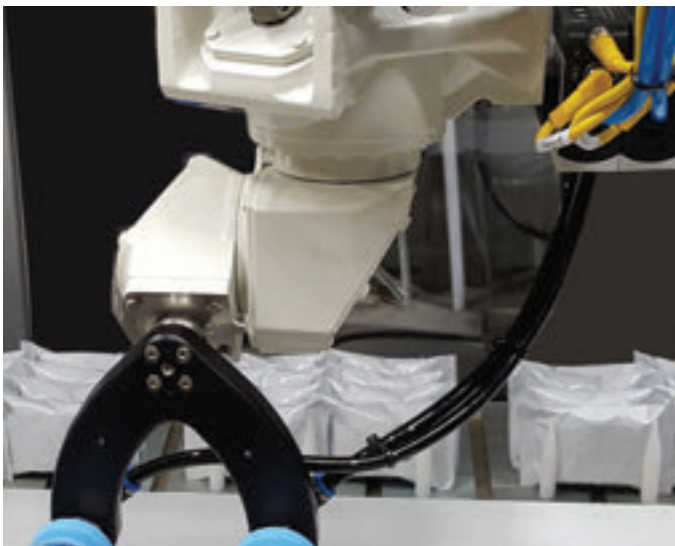
The VC30 Cartoners for the first two kit lines began with an ESS integrated FANUC M-1iA robot with vision



CRx-10iA Collaborative Robot Unloader.



M-10iD Carton Loading Robot.



M-2iA Collation Robot for Pouches.

and vacuum-style end-of-arm tooling (EOAT) that picked pouches on the conveyor and spaced them into two lanes as they entered at a rate of 150 pouches/min. Operations were as follows:

- Two FANUC M-2iA vision-enabled robots with vacuum EOAT picked the spaced pouches and placed them into staging fixtures in the 2x4 pack pattern.
- As pouches were collated, a FANUC SR-6iA robot used vacuum-cup EOAT to pick auto-bottom cartons from a magazine, square the sides, and place it in the carton transport conveyor.
- At the loading position, a FANUC M-10iD/12 robot used custom EOAT to pick the staged pouches, loading three layers of them into an erected carton, alternating between lanes to achieve a cartoning rate of seven cartons/min.
- The VC30 top closing station folded and closed the carton flaps. ESS integrated an OEM coder to print a LOT/EXP code on the side of the cartons.
- An integrated vision system inspected the code and non-compliant coded cartons were automatically rejected from the system.
- Compliant cartons were offloaded using a TaskMate Robotic Systems Machine Unloader with FANUC CRX-10iA collaborative robot that placed cartons on customer-supplied cart. ESS supplied two identical systems to carton pouches.

The third VC30 brought loaded cartons on the customer's carts from the first two lines and packaged one of each into a larger auto-bottom carton to complete the final test kit shipper.

This system also used a FANUC SR-6iA robot to erect the master carton, and an integrated laser coder printed a LOT/EXP date on the carton. Two FANUC CRX-10iA collaborative robots offloaded cartons from carts from the first two kit lines. One robot took cartons from the Kit 2 cartoning line cart and automatically loaded it into the master carton. The second robot took cartons from the Kit 1 cartoning line and placed them next to the master carton for manual loading along with other components and instruction booklets.

To increase the cartoning line's productivity, the customer ordered the VC30 cartoner to include a number of features such as lot/date inspection and barcode grading in order to ensure product integrity. Sensors and cameras around the system inspected the product, kept track of the carton count, verified carton closing, and verified product count in each carton.

Allen Bradley controls and color touchscreen HMI made the VC30 easy to operate, and FANUC robots offered high reliability for the system, according to the end user. As an authorized FANUC System Integrator and OEM machine builder, ESS was able to provide a full turnkey solution for the test kit manufacturer.

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Application brief submitted by ESS



APPLICATION BRIEF



Shiseido Moves to Forefront of Cosmetics Packaging with XTS

Machine builder Unista uses linear transport system to provide the basis for compact and flexible packaging system with minimized changeover times

Frank Würthner, Global Business Management Packaging, Beckhoff Automation

End customers in the cosmetics industry require their suppliers to provide them with packaging systems that feature maximum adaptability and flexibility. After all, the market demands ever-evolving changes in product presentation and packaging. To meet the needs of cosmetics company Shiseido, equipment manufacturer Unista developed a solution based on the eXtended Transport System (XTS) from Beckhoff Automation as well as other automation components and software from the technology supplier.

Shiseido is a Japanese maker of high-end cosmetics with an international presence. Its European headquarters and two manufacturing plants have been based in France for 30 years. Machine builder Unista, located in the Nantes region near the western coast of France, was selected by Shiseido to develop and build two packaging machines. Since Shiseido uses containers in many sizes and shapes for its diverse portfolio of products in the luxury segment, the equipment had to deliver a maximum of flexibility.

Unista has produced packaging lines for 10 years and specializes in robot-supported equipment. The machine model developed for Shiseido supports many different con-



tainer types and lot sizes while keeping changeover times to a minimum.

Keyword: Flexibility

Unista's goal was to meet the demand for flexibility without compromising the engineering, motion controls, and production process, according to Anthony Forget, managing director of Unista France. "To accommodate the broad product portfolio of Shiseido, we needed an extremely flexible machine."

Unista employed an XTS with a track length of 4 meters, which enabled them to maintain a compact machine footprint and put the available floor space to its best use.

"Unista's needs were very much in line with the properties of our XTS transport system," says David Ranchy, sales engineer at the Beckhoff office in Nantes. "XTS now functions as the machine's central component and makes the production much more flexible."

The mechatronic linear transport solution is supplemented by two 6-axis robots for product handling. The first robot takes care of the loading and unloading. It places the filled cosmetics jars on the XTS, which uses 11 movers to

transport them to the respective processing stations.

The second robot places lids on the containers and lightly screws them in before they are fully closed with a specific torque and rotation angle at the following handling station.

At the final quality control station, the containers are sorted into good and reject units. One of the key requirements involved was protecting the high-value cosmetics containers against any kind of damage to ensure that the packaged products are in line with the high-quality standards of the Shiseido brand.

Benefit: Operational agility

One advantage of the XTS in that context is the individual product transport, which is not subject to rigid synchronization between the processing stations. As a result of the individual and highly precise positioning with the movers, the machine delivers maximum throughput paired with gentle product handling.

In addition, the software-based control functions make it easy to adapt the system to changing formats, such as container diameters, on the fly. All it takes is a change in the software parameters instead of a complex and expensive machine reconfiguration.

A universal hardware and software platform

Besides the XTS, Unista also employs servomotor terminals and servomotors from Beckhoff for the handling unit that screws on the lids. Other components from the Beckhoff portfolio include EtherCat Terminals for the communication between the control components as well as TwinSafe

products for machine safety. Sourcing all components from a universal hardware and software platform means a single point of contact and fast and easy integration.

The entire machine is controlled by a space-saving, cabinet-mounted CX5140 Embedded PC that runs TwinCat 3 automation software. The drive technology of the handling unit features an especially compact design. EL7211 servomotor terminals control the dynamic AM8100 servomotors, which are connected via One Cable Technology (OCT). This reduces the cabling costs by 50% and gives the machine a very tidy appearance. A CP3918 Control Panel displays Unista's own user interface.

Simplified engineering and reduced time to market

The simple engineering and straightforward commissioning with XTS and PC-based control enabled the experts from Unista to complete a ready-to-operate machine in less than 10 weeks. With its short time to market and high degree of operational flexibility, the XTS application for Shiseido represents a prime example of mechanical engineering in the age of Industry 4.0 that is at the forefront of cosmetics packaging.

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APPLICATION BRIEF



New Technology Comes to Heat Seal Bars

This packaging machinery OEM is pioneering the use of a brand new method of making heat seal bars that is adapted from printed circuit board manufacturing.

Pat Reynolds, Editor Emeritus, *Packaging World*

SN Maschinenbau (SN) is a German manufacturer of horizontal pouch packaging machines. In the past few years, SN has led the way in the use of a new heat seal bar technology from Germany's watttron called cera2seal. Unlike the technology used for many years, where the same temperature is delivered across the entire length of the seal bar, with cera2seal, the temperature can be controlled in a targeted manner.

Not all pouch-sealing operations require this dynamically regulated temperature control. But in a standup pouch or a pouch with a zipper or spout, the material is thicker in some areas due to folds that are required. Thus, in some areas across the length of the seal being made, the tooling needs to close on four layers of flexible film while in other areas it closes on just two layers. With watttron's tooling, it's possible to deliver 200° to the four-layer areas and just 150° to the two-layer spots. And that, of course, brings cost and sustainability benefits.

"When we started to integrate the watttron sealing tools into our machinery, we noticed that we had a significantly lower heat input into the machine body," says Gunnar Flosbach, head of development and design at SN. "We've seen lower energy consumption, which, of course, is a great advantage in view of today's emphasis on environmental concerns."

Another reason it's desirable to have greater control over heat sealing temperatures has to do with recent and increasingly rapid developments in mono-material packaging films. The idea behind such films is that if you're not combining things like aluminum foil, polyester, or nylon, for example, in a largely polyethylene (PE) composition, the resulting material fits far more readily into the existing and well-established PE recycle stream. But these new mono-materials are more easily damaged or tend to stretch too much if the heat being applied to them is not optimally

controlled. The watttron tooling delivers this optimal heat control.

A third benefit to the cera2seal technology is that due to the low thermal mass of the system—i.e., the tooling is much lighter—heat up and cool down are very quick. This allows easy access to the machinery by operators and minimizes potential for danger. Included is an LED display that signals the operator when the sealing element is safe to touch.

So much for the "what" of cera2seal, which, it's important to point out, can be retrofitted onto existing form/fill/seal machines. What about the "how?" According to watttron CEO Marcus Stein, the manufacturing process behind cera2seal is based on ceramic thick film technology commonly used in the making of printed circuit boards (PCBs) in the computer industry. So it's fundamentally a matter of printing electrical circuits onto a ceramic/aluminum oxide substrate. A key difference is that the PCBs found in the computer industry are not designed for a high-temperature environment. So watttron's technology bears more similarity to the PCBs found in the automotive or aerospace industries, where electrical circuits are printed onto ceramic/aluminum substrates in a way that permits them to function in high-heat environments.



Among the machines featuring watttron's new heat seal bar technology is SN's FM 060 horizontal form/fill/seal machine.



Integrated control electronics inside the wattron sealing bars deliver varying temperatures to electrical circuits printed on the seal bar's ceramic/aluminum oxide surface.

What's actually printed along the length of a wattron seal bar is a series of individual zones each measuring 5 mm sq (about 1/2 sq in.). Each zone is independently controlled by integrated control electronics. A central information and intelligence unit called the wattrix server functions like a small PC and communicates to each zone what temperature it should deliver and receives back the real temperature of each zone.

SN currently has horizontal form/fill/seal systems running commercially at customer plants where side seals are made via wattron cera2seal technology. In development are machines that will also use cera2seal tools to seal pour spout fitments to flexible film pouches.

One note of interest is that before wattron delivered its unique flexible film sealing capabilities, it was working on a similar version of the technology that was designed for the tooling used on thermoforming machinery. In fact, at PACK EXPO Las Vegas 2019, CEO Stein delivered a presentation on this cera2heat topic as part of the Innovation Stage series. But making thermoforming tooling a commercial reality proved a little more complicated than heat seal tooling. Stein does indicate, however, that pilot applications in thermoforming are in place and that he expects that 2021 will see an announcement on progress made in the thermoforming space.

Finally, wattron readily acknowledges that its heat seal tooling comes with an upcharge. Stein describes it as higher than traditional conductive sealing but lower than ultrasonic sealing. But if it delivers such things as more uptime, flexibility, manufacturing consistency, and improved quality control, Stein believes that OEMs and consumer packaged goods companies alike will be only too happy to make the investment.

Go to oemgo.to/wattronvideo for a video animation showing the wattron tooling in action.

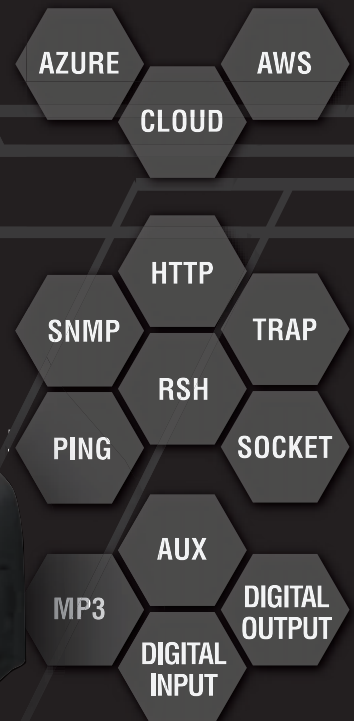
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AmSkills Takes a Hands-on Approach to Manufacturing Training

The Florida-based non-profit organization focuses on people first when conducting workforce training. As a result, it is successfully filling jobs and changing lives.

Stephanie Neil, Editor-in-Chief

When it comes to learning a manufacturing skill, the hands-on experience is, hands down, the best approach. Getting a diverse group of people interested in a career in manufacturing is, on the other hand, an enormous hurdle.

But one Florida organization has taken a creative ap-

proach to recruiting that could not only solve the industry's skills crisis, but could change lives and strengthen communities as well.

AmSkills, Inc., a 501c3 non-profit organization as of 2017, was created to help local manufacturers employ more skilled tradespeople. "But we take the approach to



focus first on the person, and that results in filling jobs,” says Tom Mudano, AmSkills’ president and CEO, noting that recruitment is one of the most difficult things to do in the manufacturing industry.

According to a 2016 survey of local colleges by the Florida Chamber of Commerce, the majority of local employers felt that the college graduates that interviewed for manufacturing positions were unqualified for the job. Furthermore, more than 22% of students in the Pinellas, Pasco, and Hernando counties in Florida don’t graduate from high school.

Many of these people are a perfect fit for manufacturing careers—they just may not know it until they try it. People like Daniel, who, Mudano explained, was working at a golf course and decided to participate in the AmSkills Career Discovery Bootcamp and is now employed as a production assistant for a local manufacturer. He knew he liked working with his hands but had not considered manufacturing until he completed the AmSkills program. Not only is Daniel working for a local manufacturer, but he has also completed one PMMI Certification in Fluid Power, is currently enrolled in the AmSkills PLC Training Program, and is a potential apprentice candidate.

The personal approach

AmSkills set out to provide 80% hands-on skills training to youth, adults, and veterans, providing both technical and life skills training that will translate to a long-term career at local manufacturing companies.

This “recruit, train, sustain” operation comes in a few forms. For high schoolers, students are recruited for a hands-on one-day workshop where they are building something as a team. Interested students are then invited to attend the AmSkills High School Pre-Apprenticeship program, designed for juniors and seniors and currently conducted at schools in two counties.

AmSkills provides curriculum, technical instructors (machining, mechatronics, robotics), and equipment, funded through grants from the Department of Education and other sources. The training replicates the real world with time clock tracking, hands-on skills training, and job preparation. Upon successful completion, pre-apprentice candidates may be offered paid jobs or apprenticeships from local manufacturers.

As part of the program, students are reading blueprints, measuring, using hand tools, working on computers, doing

writing exercises, using virtual reality to test out different jobs, going to plant tours, and working side-by-side with manufacturing and human resources professionals.

For adults, the AmSkills Mobile Workshop travels to multiple locations to set-up temporary training centers to conduct a one-day Manufacturing Production Workshop, followed by a two-week Career Discovery Bootcamp. Candidates participate in tours to local manufacturers, complete multiple hands-on individual and team projects, prepare their resumes, complete mock interviews, and are introduced to a variety of careers in the manufacturing industry through lunch and learns conducted by local participating manufacturers.

On the second to last day instructors provide competency assessments to participating employers that evaluate participants’ technical and soft skills, from punctuality to completion of assignments, in preparation for guaranteed job interviews with multiple employers on the last day of the bootcamp.

“We will not conduct the bootcamp unless we have multiple hiring manufacturers within a 20-mile radius, providing the participants job opportunities and employers a pipeline of vetted candidates,” Mudano says. The program has been so successful that it is being looked at by other cities and states across the country. “We created this model to be replicated and recently won another grant to roll this out in Dallas, Texas.”

Following the bootcamp, candidates can participate in the AmSkills Adult Pre-Apprenticeship or Apprenticeship Programs. The curriculum in advanced courses cover machining and mechatronics, the latter of which is based on the PMMI mechatronics certification tests which are nationally and industry accepted and endorsed by the National Association of Manufacturers’ Skills Certification System.

According to Viggo Nielsen, the former general manager at Mettler-Toledo Safeline in the Tampa area who is on the AmSkills Board of Directors, this program is a win-win-win. “Attendees win, communities and counties win because we are [recruiting] people who otherwise may be having a hard time providing for themselves into an active role in the workforce, and of course the employer wins,” he says.

For more information on AmSkills visit: www.amskills.org

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PERSPECTIVES

It's Time to Step-Up Machine Safety

OEMs understand the need to comply with machine safety standards, but new requirements may necessitate bringing in a third party to help mitigate risk.

Stephanie Neil, Editor-in-Chief

Polytron is a systems integrator (SI) specializing in automation and controls, industrial networks, simulation, smart manufacturing, and cybersecurity. But another area of expertise the company offers as a service that is very valuable, and sometimes overlooked, is machine safety assessments and verification/validations.

Polytron's Safety Practice helps companies—mostly large food and beverage and CPG manufacturers—to protect packaging and processing equipment, and, of course, people. The safety team hold certifications in global safety competency, with Functional Safety Engineer (FSE) certified by TÜV Rheinland and Certified Machine Safety Experts – CMSE – TÜV NORD. These certifications held by the Polytron team validate that a manufacturer's safety projects will be delivered with proven competency and expertise in best-in-class machine safety practices and thorough understanding of safety standards.

"In the safety business, we have a safety lifecycle from risk assessment, safety definitions, designing, implementation, validation, and help with overall standards—either compliance or helping to write standards for the end users," says Sean Daswani, project manager and safety business leader at Polytron. And while the safety lifecycle is focused on the end user, "pieces of that lifecycle go directly to help facilitate the OEM that is selling equipment to the manufacturer."

The need for machine builders to be part of the process is the reason that Polytron is extending its service to work directly with them. And they are finding that a lot of the OEMs they work with have a few different issues.

"One is, the OEMs in the U.S. that are trying to

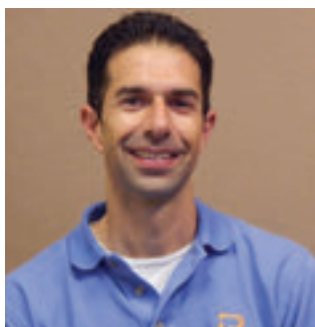
sell machines over in Europe have an issue with certain requirements of the machinery directive that has to be met to get machines to the EU," Daswani says. Here in the U.S., the standards are not as strict, but there are still standard enforcements, like the new ANSI B11.0 (2020), which outlines the responsibilities of the machine builder. "We've helped manufacturers with standards, but they require risk assessments at the OEM facility to identify hazards and they want to know what [the OEM] has done to mitigate those."

Part of that mitigation may be to bring Polytron in during the factory acceptance test (FAT) to offer an equipment assessment as a third party. In that scenario, it would likely be the manufacturer that would bring in Polytron. But there is value-add for the OEM as well. "Once we do the safety risk assessment, identify hazards and safeguards, and get everything to acceptable levels, we hand over that documentation with all of the standards that meet the specifications," Daswani says, noting that this helps bridge the disconnect that often occurs between the end user and the machine builder when it comes to conforming to equipment standards.

The documentation, comprised of the industry standards for risk assessment, can be used later during validation to ensure all scenarios—from devices to wiring—have passed and the equipment is safe for operators.

New safety concerns

Since the pandemic, there's another reason to conduct a safety analysis, and that has to do with workforce safety programs put into place and manufacturers having to decide what level of risk to take in the production environment. With minimum operators on the plant floor due to social distancing guidelines, or the need to shift operators around, it could mean putting someone in charge of a



Sean Daswani, project manager and safety business leader at Polytron



A significant safety standard

The new ANSI B11.0 (2020), provides clarity on the responsibilities assigned to the machine supplier (OEM). The updated standard is much broader than the previous version. Here's a snapshot:

- The component supplier, **machine supplier**, and the machine user shall be responsible for achieving acceptable risk within the scope of their work activity.
- The **machine supplier** shall determine what risk reduction measures, if any, are required to achieve acceptable risk with any components it integrates into the machine.
- The **machine supplier** shall obtain documentation from the component supplier as required for the component(s), including installation requirements, operating instructions, and maintenance requirements.
- When engineering controls (guards, control functions or devices,) are provided, the component user / **machine supplier** shall be responsible for ensuring that it is integrated and installed in accordance with the requirements of this standard.
- The **supplier** shall use the risk assessment process in designing and constructing the machine and for developing the information for operation and maintenance of the machinery, considering the lifecycle of the machine.
- The **supplier** shall provide risk reduction measure(s) as determined in the supplier risk assessment and the appropriate machine-specific "base" (type-C) safety standard.
- ... **machinery suppliers** shall use a risk assessment process such as the one described in clause 6 in the design, construction, reconstruction and modification of machinery to meet the applicable requirements of clause 7 and any applicable machine-specific "base" (type-C) safety standard.
- **Suppliers** and users are required to perform a risk assessment (see clause 5) to reduce risk to an acceptable level.
- The **supplier** shall provide information for operation and maintenance of machinery that consists of documents, signs, signals, symbols and/or diagrams used to convey information to the user.
- The **machinery supplier** shall inform the user(s) of any machine-specific PPE requirements.

- The **supplier** shall provide materials or information in the manual for the user to incorporate into its training program(s) (see clause 8).

Source: ANSI B11.0 (2020)

Polytron's Safety Lifecycle Used to Reach a Safe Machine State, Includes:

- **Regulatory and Corporate Safety Standards:** We apply safety standards as the foundation for every decision and step in the process.
- **Risk Assessment:** By conducting a risk assessment or safety audit, we identify the hazards and the risk level of each hazard.
- **Definition:** Using the results of the risk assessment, Polytron creates a definition of how to address each hazard.
- **Design:** A detailed safety design is created to provide a functional design spec, hardware/software requirements, installation bids, and final scope, schedule, and cost for the safety solution to mitigate each hazard.
- **Implement:** Once approved, the solution is implemented on equipment.
- **Validation:** The solution is validated to ensure that it meets the design specification, regulatory, and company safety standards.
- **Training:** A machine safety project typically makes operational changes to the equipment. This requires that operators, maintenance, and technical staff must be re-trained for the safe operation of the newly updated equipment.

Polytron, Inc., based in Duluth, Georgia, is the first solution partner in Rockwell Automation's PartnerNetwork Machine Safety program. The firm is a CSIA CERTIFIED Systems Integrator, Cisco Digital Systems Integrator, and 2015 and 2019 System Integrator of the Year. The company brings almost 40 years of engineering expertise to deliver full manufacturing systems and solutions.

machine that they are not familiar with, which could lead to unexpected downtime.

"We see manufacturers moving toward standardized machine safety programs across the organization for greater plant floor efficiency in maintenance, workforce training, and documentation for equipment safety standards. This approach allows the manufacturer to maintain insurance standardization and stockholder confidence in a safe work environment," Daswani says.

These industry drivers are requiring changes related to a comprehensive safety design on new and existing equipment, including detailed documentation to meet ISO and ANSI standards following the life cycle of the equipment,

equipment risk assessments for hazard standardization, an analysis of the performance level achieved by each safety function using an industry-accepted tool such as the Safety Integrity Software Tool for the Evaluation of Machine Applications (SISTEMA), as well as the need for third party verification and validation.

"In the U.S., the owner of the equipment, typically our customer [the manufacturer], is responsible for the safe functioning of their equipment and are legally liable for ensuring that," Daswani says.

Tabletop Industrial Robot

FANUC America, fanucamerica.com

This new robot expands FANUC's LR Mate robot series to 10 model variations. The LR Mate robot series has several unique features including its lightweight, tabletop size, which is often compared to the size of a person's arm. All 10 models include clean room and wash proof versions, each with various wrist speeds and reaches to accommodate even the most limited workspace.



Micro Servo Motor Controller

Arcus Servo Motion, arcusservo.com

The TITAN-NXS-SCX is a closed loop servo driver (that can also run in open loop stepper) and standalone controller that is able to handle most of the commonly used motors in the industry: stepper, brushless servo, linear, shaft, DC, and voice coil motors. The controller also supports USB and RS485 communication and comes with many motion control features like auto parameter detection, auto tuning, force/torque control, and multi-thread motion programming. The controller also uses intuitive and easy-to-use TITAN Software that enables anyone to startup the servo motion system within minutes.



Machine Vision-Specific Control Software

Beckhoff Automation, beckhoff.com

Beckhoff's new TwinCat Vision control combined with its TwinCat HMI gives users the option of directly integrating image processing into the TwinCat HMI operator interface. TwinCat Vision can transmit live video and images from machine vision systems into TwinCat HMI. This control solution can be configured within minutes, and it can expand the image display control and color control. The image display control enables direct linking of multiple machine vision images and switching easily between currently displayed images.



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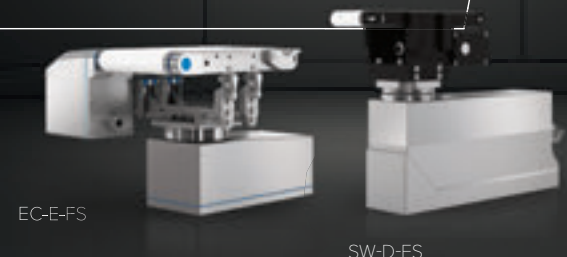


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FINAL THOUGHTS

JIM PITTAS PRESIDENT & CEO, PMMI

Industry-Wide Enthusiasm for Productive New Normal at PACK EXPO



PMMI Business Intelligence's quarterly business indicator tool compares quarterly business activity regarding new orders, quotations and proposal activity from OEMs, and current and planned investments from the end-users who represent their customers. Typically, an index of 50 means the midpoint and no significant change, while indexes higher than 50 represent expansion and growth.

Rarely do we see numbers exceeding the mid to high 60s; and in the 15 years that we have run these reports, I don't recall ever seeing an index over 70.

Our quarterly indicator for the first quarter of 2021 revealed new orders and quotations with an index over 80 and planned investments exceeding 70.

The extremely positive news came on the heels of a unanimous vote of confidence from PMMI's Board of Directors Meeting at April's Executive Leadership Conference (ELC). The ELC was full of content pointing towards an industry preparing to safely return to networking and interacting away from our Zoom meetings and conference calls. Most importantly for OEMs and CPGs, it also indicated the welcome return of PACK EXPO Las Vegas and Healthcare Packaging EXPO.

Each ELC session reinforced the significant need for an in-person event where PMMI members can meet with customers to discuss their challenges and find solutions to their needs. Many of you have told me how eager your customers are to attend PACK EXPO Las Vegas and Healthcare Packaging EXPO, and I assure you PMMI staff is working daily to ensure we present a safe and productive in-person trade show.

The ELC began with a bullish forecast for the consumer and industrial economies in the next three to five years from Alex Chausovsky, senior business advisor at ITR Economics. Chausovsky noted that the majority of ITR's leading indicators say fairly conclusively that at least for the next 12 to 15 months, there's going to be a rise in the business cycle. With our industry's essential role in keeping the U.S. moving forward, this period of accelerated growth will require OEM and CPG collaboration to keep pace with changing consumer demands.

A CPG panel followed the positive economic outlook, with participants indicating the growing need to see new machinery, technology, and materials in person to meet evolving consumer demands. Mark Mikol, senior director, The Schwan Food Company, Rick Rice, controls engineer, Crest

Foods Co., Inc., and Lisa Rathburn, vice president of engineering & continuous improvement, T. Marzetti Company, each specified that while they have used remote options for seeing and testing new equipment, they are eager for the opportunity to experience technology in action.

These sentiments line up with results from our recent PMMI end user survey. Nine out of 10 packaging and processing professionals said in-person trade shows are essential for networking and discovering what is new in the industry, further agreeing that nothing can replace seeing and touching equipment, asking questions and receiving immediate feedback. Others cited that the diverse array of exhibitors and education found at in-person events like PACK EXPO make it an ideal one-stop-shop for investigating multiple solutions for current projects as well as potential ideas on the horizon. The survey included end users in beverage, food, personal care, pharmaceutical and medical devices, representing many of the 40 vertical markets expected to attend PACK EXPO Las Vegas and Healthcare Packaging EXPO.

Combine this with multiple free educational platforms and countless networking opportunities, and the event will provide limitless prospects for exchanging ideas and professional growth. Exhibitors continue to secure space across four spread out Las Vegas Convention Center Halls with more industry associations adding support as you read this. Currently 19 association partners have signed on to exhibit at Las Vegas, offering opportunities for their members to connect during the show, including CPA, the Association for Contract Packagers and Manufacturers, the Institute of Packaging Professionals (IoPP), Foil & Specialty Effects Association (FSEA), OMAC-The Organization for Machine Automation and Control, the Flexible Packaging Association, and more.

It's time to get our industry back together conducting business in person. With our *PACK Ready* health and safety program, PACK EXPO Las Vegas and Healthcare Packaging EXPO will do just that by implementing thorough and up-to-date protocols for a safe and successful in-person event.

I can't wait to see you there.

For more information on exhibiting at PACK EXPO Las Vegas, visit:
oemgo.to/pelv

Jim Pittas is the President & CEO of PMMI. He may be reached at jpittas@pmmi.org or at [linkedin.com/in/jim-pittas-162ab79/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jim-pittas-162ab79/).



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