

## Autobag Helps Hiretech Increase Packaging Productivity by 90% and Improve Lead Times by 60%



Hiretech manufactures floor sanders, steam wallpaper strippers and consumables for the tool hire and professional contractor markets. The Watford based company, in the U.K., sells throughout the world, with its own operation in the U.S. for sales and distribution. To meet increasing universal demand for its products, the company needed to streamline its packaging operation. In the words of Hiretech's **Manufacturing Manager, Ron Putta**, the system was "not very 21<sup>st</sup> century and at times a bit crude."

He said, "Our packaging was manual and needed reviewing. Products would be placed into poly tubing from a roll and then sealed manually using a push down heat sealer. As products varied in size, the package had to be sealed on three sides to make it a sensible size."

Additionally, sticky labels were printed by the production office and then issued to the shop floor to pack the product. "We wanted a UK supplier of systems and bags and looked at Automated Packaging System's Total System Solution. We chose an APS Autobag system comprising an Excel fitted with a load support shelf, bag seal flatteners and a Precision in-line printer because of price and the fact that the system was technologically more advanced than competitive products."

A range of bags, sized from 3 x 5 inches to 9 x 13.5 inches with white fronts and clear backs, some with Butterfly holes, allow for greater flexibility. Hiretech has found the new system to be highly efficient. Jobs are issued to shop floor, product is picked and packed immediately and product data is held on a PC next to the machine.

Temporary labor was often used to cope with demand but this is now a thing of the past. Ron Putta explained, "We can now clear any bulk orders in less than a day. The pickers locating product from storage often can't keep up with the machine! We can now bag 100 parts in less time than it takes to find the items, count them out into a kit and deliver them to the bagger."

The benefits were soon clear. "It used to take our packer about 45 seconds to pack two screws into poly tubing, seal it and fit the label. Thanks to Autobag, the same person can do the job in less than two seconds - a batch of 1000 that used to take 12 hours is now completed within an hour," claims Ron.

As the machine is able to count the product, the stock delivered is more accurate, and the in-line printer means a more presentable package with more information printed on it.

Hiretech has also shortened its in-house lead times. Before the company installed the Autobag system, large quantities of stock were held, as the lead-time in-house was up to four weeks to pack an item.

Ron Putta concluded: "We have now cut this lead time down to 10 days and we can react rapidly to any unforeseen demand. Previously, there would have been delays in supplying orders. This has been quite a turn-around for us. The quality of packing, customer perception of the professionally presented finished product, speed of bagging and flexibility were our reason for purchasing Autobag. We never really considered the impact on lead time and stock. It was one of those nice surprises."



Hiretech prints label information directly onto the bag using a 300 dpi Autobag Precision Printer.

