

CASE STUDY

Flexible OEM Accessories Packaging

Today's private cars on average consist of 12,000 separate parts. Automobile manufacturers place great demands on suppliers, from product development to shipment. In order to package OEM supplier parts more efficiently, the Austrian company ACR GmbH sought a very flexible, semi-automatic packaging solution.

For over 20 years Automotive Components Reiter GmbH (ACR) has remained a reliable automotive and related industrial systems supplier. Many car drivers would, for example, recognize their sunshades, headlights or wind deflector components.

Manual Packaging

Up until now the accessory parts manufactured by ACR have been packaged manually by the company's own employees. Upon the additional acceptance of a major OEM contract a search has been underway for a more efficient solution in the packaging area as well. Wolfgang Reiter, Project Management head explains: "Of course economical viability and cost effectiveness are of considerable importance even to us. Instead of just hiring more employees for the packaging area, we searched for a partially automatic solution." However, the system was supposed to be very flexible in order to be able to package the most diverse products with highly differentiated order quantities. "We would package orders sometimes containing 100 items and other times containing 20,000 items. Often these are batched with up to 15 part numbers. Even the item lists in this regard are very diverse," Wolfgang Reiter explains. Luckily the "Upper Austrians" caught up with Automated Packaging Systems (APS) at the "interpack" trade fair. APS is a leading producer of packaging systems for small parts and developer of the bag on a roll.

Flexible System Discovered

"We are familiar with APS trade rival products," Wolfgang Reiter explains. "But we went with this company because its systems are very flexible during operations and make it possible to switch from one pouch size to another in short order. APS machines' set-up times are second to none." ACR finally ordered an Autobag® AB 180 bagging system featuring a P1 412 thermal transfer printer and a PS 125 tabletop bagger.

The mobile AB 180 System packs up to 80 pouches a minute. At the same time the automatically delivered Autobag pouches are pre-opened, filled and sealed. A touch screen integrated into the bagging system is used not only to control the printing and bagging system, but also to easily operate and coordinate any help, diagnostic, data processing as well as machine monitoring functions. The operator can switch over the pouch size in less than two minutes. Finally, an integrated diagnostic tool as well as the replace-and-repair module ensures a high level of system availability.



Company Name

Automotive Components Reiter GmbH (ACR)

Products Being Packaged

Sunshades, headlights or wind deflector components

Equipment Used

Autobag® AB 180™
Autobag® PS 125™

Materials Used

Autobag® pre-opened Bags-on-a-Roll



By using the PS 125 tabletop bagger that was ordered for packing smaller production volumes, 25 pouches per minute can be packed in continuous mode. The bagger, which only weighs 82 lbs., needs merely 22" x 19" of installation area. The use of the PS 125 makes it possible to fill and seal pouches of 2" up to 10" in width and from 4" up to 18" in length by hand.

System Integration and Interface

To supply products to the APS bagging system AB 180, the ACR specialists developed their own system. It was seamlessly connected by PLC to the AB 180. All APS baggers, just like the thermal transfer printer, for this purpose have both separate USB ports as well as parallel and serial ports. In this way an external connection can be established to PCs, notebooks or proprietary information technology systems for purposes of data transmission. The baggers in this way can also be integrated into production processes already in place. ACR integrated the Autobag AB 180 bagging system's thermal transfer printer into its own Intranet. As a result of the preparatory work it was provided with the appropriate text, graphic and barcode data for printing onto pouches. In accordance with a specific customer requirement, in this regard the most diverse label formats can be implemented.

ACR now processes approximately 300,000 Autobag pouches per year. Even with the pouch sizes flexibility is in demand. "Sometimes we pack a 200 batch in a medium sized pouch format, then a 150 batch in a large format and then again 500 product batches in a small pouch size. APS reacts to this very quickly if we need pouches," project manager Reiter feels.

Currently at ACR serious consideration is being given to the use of an additional Autobag AB 180 bagging system. Wolfgang Reiter sums it up: "We achieved a considerable productivity edge by using the APS bagging system and have a stronger market presence. We are very pleased with this bagging system and in the event of further rising demand will go with this system again."

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