

CASE STUDY

Brake the Cycle of High Packaging Costs.

Background

Nelson Stokes invested in an Autobag® AB 180 OneStep™ last year to pack its range of 6,500 brake hoses. The hoses, assembled at the company's North Cornwall production facility and destined for the automotive aftermarket at home and abroad, are now quickly and efficiently packed into customer-branded and non-branded bags.

Commercial director Mark Stokes explains: "We specified a Comcount Maximizer in-feed conveyor with our AB 180 and the system is proving to be reliable and very easy to use.

The Challenge

"Our goal was to install a system that will pack brake hoses much more efficiently, allowing us to redeploy labor. We have a great team of people here so this wasn't about losing anyone; we wanted to make better use of their time and skills elsewhere in the business.

The Solution

"Previously we packed into boxes and into plastic tube which we separated into pockets with heat sealers. Since the switch we're much faster and more efficient, packing into pre-opened bags that are sealed automatically. Switching from packing one product to another is no problem, especially if all that's needed is a change to the labeling. But we're sure there are still improvements to be made in our production scheduling to minimize bag changeovers.

There is competition for access to the AB 180 OneStep from elsewhere in the Nelson Stokes business. Historically the company packed its increasingly wide range of repair kits for wheel and master cylinders by hand.

The Results

"The new system drastically reduced the amount of time it takes to pack a kit. This wasn't the main reason for commissioning the AB 180, but it's proven to be a very useful asset," says Mark.

Changing customers from boxes and tube to pre-branded and clear bags hasn't proved an issue. "Everyone we've shown bagged product to has been happy. One or two customers have needed to review their point-of-sale and storage - the new bags don't stack like the boxed product did. But they recognize the benefits; they can store 100 bagged hoses in an eighth of the space required for boxed product."

Company Name

Nelson Stokes

Products Being Packaged

Brake hoses

Equipment Used

Autobag® AB 180 OneStep™

Custom Integration

Comcount Maximizer in-feed conveyor

Materials Used

Autobag® Pre-opened Bags-on-a-Roll

Return on Investment

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The Automated Packaging System team that specified and installed the system, sales engineer Martin Richards and service engineer Jon Williams, trained a team of two at Nelson Stokes who's job it is now to oversee the equipment and look after bag changeovers.

"Learning to operate the AB 180 OneStep wasn't nearly as much of a challenge as the packing team feared," explains Martin Richards. "Today Nelson Stokes has 3 or 4 operators who formerly packed by hand and now confidently operate the conveyor and bagger.

The Future

"It's still early days and we're learning to make best use of the new system," concludes Mark Stokes. "But six months after installation we're making improvements in our efficiency and the bagger and conveyor are performing well. Right now it's working almost full-time while we switch one of our biggest customers over to bags from boxes. As soon as that's done, it'll be back to packing kits for a while."

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