CASE STUDY

Raindrip® Turns to Autobag® for Production Efficiency Improvements.

High-Speed Print-n-Pack™ Systems Meet the Need for Maximum Productivity During Seasonal Rush

Raindrip, a leading manufacturer of drip irrigation products, has seen seasonal rushes before, but they knew the rebounding economy and record new home construction of Spring 2004 was going to create more demand for their products than existing production could handle. Plus, new contracts with national retailers were creating the need for unique packaging solutions. The company receives a large percentage of its annual business in March through June and that time was rapidly approaching.

Previous Packaging Method

Raindrip used to package its small fittings, valves and tubing in bags of 50 to 100 parts and sell them to professional landscapers and irrigation installers. However, the burgeoning retail market for do-it-yourself home improvement was driving new demand for approximately 20 different kit assemblies and a much smaller package with five to ten components per bag. These bags also had to be pre-printed with bar code and part number information suitable for retail sales at Home Depot, Lowes, and other major home improvement store chains. If Raindrip could respond quickly, they could capture market share in a new, high-growth market.

Raindrip's existing packaging systems (6) were operating at full speed and could not keep up with the manual insertion team of 12 employees. Downtime for maintenance and changeovers was unacceptable and holding efficiency levels down to about 80 percent. Eric Gutzmann, Production Planner for Raindrip, knew he could not go into their busiest months with these kinds of production levels; he had to find a way to improve efficiency and increase output. In January 2004, Gutzmann evaluated, and subsequently ordered, two new Autobag AB 180 baggers from Automated Packaging Systems. Each unit came with a high-speed PI 412c printer that allowed Raindrip to print accurate bar code information and graphics directly onto the polybag in a continuous operation. A new "Target Registration Control" feature ensured accurate positioning of graphics on the bag and improved print quality. Printing information for each individual customer was stored in a networked computer and made instantly available at the bagger control panel for changeovers on the fly.

Company Name
Raindrip - A leading manufacturer of drip irrigation products

Products Being Packaged
Small fittings, valves and tubing

Equipment Used
Autobag® AB 180 with a high-speed PI 412c printer

Custom Integration
The Autobag® AB 180 did not require custom integration for this application.

Materials Used
Autobag® Bags-on-a-Roll

Return on Investment
"Our two new Autobag systems allowed us to increase productivity by 20 percent."

New Packaging Method

Operating at speeds approaching 80 bags per minute, the Autobag systems were able to keep up with manual and automated insertions as fast as the production team could insert products. Bag size changeovers from 4 to 11 inches and printing changes were typically performed in less than two minutes. Gutzmann estimates a 98 percent uptime for the new Autobag units. "Our operators fight over who gets to use the new Autobag systems because setup is easier with the touch screen control, all of the printing queues are stored in memory, and there are rarely any breakdowns," said Gutzmann.

Gutzmann had used Automated Packaging Systems before, so he knew their team of field service engineers was the best in the business. "Mike Butler, the Autobag service engineer, rates a 10 out of 10," says Gutzmann. "Mike generally tries to fix any problems we may have the same day with an unscheduled service call, or technical support over the phone. The new units are so well designed Mike can walk me through an adjustment procedure over the phone. Technical service support for our previous bagging equipment was virtually non-existent," Gutzmann added.

Raindrip also switched its line of polybags to genuine Autobag bags-on-a-roll products and noticed an immediate improvement in quality and reduced scrap. Automated Packaging Systems offered a total systems approach with their "Systems Advantage" program, which included the bagging machine, bag materials, and full service support with priority pricing and performance guarantees. "We have tried other bag-on-a-roll systems, but the Autobag products are unparalleled in quality and technical support… bottom line they deliver uptime," explained Gutzmann.

Success Story

Raindrip just completed its busiest quarter ever and was able to meet increased demands for production volume and cost containment, thanks in part to its partnership with Automated Packaging Systems. "Our two new Autobag systems allowed us to increase productivity by 20 percent without adding additional staff," Gutzmann summarized.

Founded in 1975, Raindrip pioneered drip irrigation and low volume watering for professional landscapers and gardening enthusiasts. The company was acquired by Agrifim™ in 2000, which allowed the two companies to combine strengths and provide a comprehensive suite of products for irrigation professionals. Today, Raindrip is a market leader, producing a full line of drip and micro-irrigation products, including kits, tubing, drippers, sprinklers, misters, fittings and accessories.

Automated Packaging Systems has been designing and manufacturing original Autobag®, AirPouch® and SidePouch® systems and products for over 50 years. With more than 30,000 packaging systems in operation and a worldwide service organization, Automated Packaging Systems has the experience and support to deliver the ultimate in customer satisfaction. Automated Packaging Systems offers a complete line of baggers, void-fill and protective packaging systems, thermal transfer imprinters, counters, scales, and specialty packaging materials. Complete information is available at the company's website.

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