

VELOCITY VIDEO CASE HISTORY

A DC VELOCITY SPEED CHALLENGE

Fast film

An automated storage and retrieval system keeps plastic wrapping materials on the move at Next Generation Films.

FAST GROWTH IS USUALLY A GOOD THING FOR A MANUFACTURER, but it can also put constraints on distribution. Next Generation Films, a manufacturer of plastic film products, was facing such a problem.

Headquartered in Lexington, Ohio, Next Generation boasts four film production plants on its campus as well as a converting facility that produces bags and printed materials. Many of its customers are food manufacturers that wrap their products in Next Generation's plastic films, allowing consumers to see the goods while still offering product protection.

Until recently, Next Generation utilized an off-site warehouse for distribution, but it was quickly running out of space. The manual processes slowed distribution and were not able to keep up with the demands of a growing company. Next Generation wanted to automate, but it needed to find the right solution for handling its bulky products.

Jason Hildenbrand, director of logistics, says his company produces a lot of diverse products, which further complicates handling and distribution. "Certainly, we have a lot of different pallet sizes to meet customer expectations and to work effectively in different applications. That's often hard for automated equipment to handle," he explains.

HANDLING THE COMPLEXITY

To meet its needs, Next Generation turned to Interlake Mecalux to design a new advanced distribution center that features a very large automated storage and retrieval system (AS/RS).

"Interlake Mecalux is an innovative company, and they came up

with the best solution of all the folks we talked with to help us deal with our concerns and make this as seamless as possible," recalls Hildenbrand.

The AS/RS has brought speed and consistency to distribution. Cranes working in the machine's six aisles move pallets in and out of the system's 15,000 storage locations. The rugged system is able to handle heavy loads of film in excess of 2,600 pounds. The combined operation of the six stacker cranes produces superior results that more than satisfy the needs and forecasted growth of Next Generation Films.

"So we can really turn a lot of material," says Hildenbrand. "I think if you do the math, that's over a couple of thousand pallets a day if we are running full bore 24/7. That well exceeds our needs for our current demand and positions us for the future."

SET FOR THE FUTURE

Since building this new facility, Next Generation Films has been able to distribute its products more efficiently with less product damage. It also knows that it has room to grow. The automated system itself is designed

to be easily expandable simply by extending the length of the AS/RS aisles and adding more racking.

"One nice thing about Interlake Mecalux is that they are very present and they are very dedicated. They have been here with us through the entire process," adds Hildenbrand. "On any automation project, there are going to be a few bumps in the road. But they've really stood by the product and the installation, and done everything that they could to help us get to a position where we are fully self-sufficient and productive."



To see a video of the AS/RS system in action at Next Generation Films' new distribution center in Lexington, Ohio, go to dcvtv.com and click on Channel 2.