

Storage system for smart waste management

Due to the rapid technological development in optimising production processes, local furniture manufacturers can hardly avoid investing in new equipment. In order to increase productivity and cash-flow, an investment in automation becomes more and more essential. Intelligent storage systems and software solutions help today's cabinet makers to increase their flexibility and improve their competitiveness.

The Wagga Wagga based company Adaptive Interiors in rural New South Wales have recognised the importance of automation processes and recently purchased a Homag Automation (Bargstedt) TLF210 and a Weeke Vantage 100/612 CNC processing centre from Homag Australia. Additionally, they invested in Cut Rite, the software optimisation package from the Homag Group.

Refining the production process

Adaptive Interiors is a family-run business that started operation in 2007. 25-year old William Pridham is the son of the owner John and has now taken over the general management role while his brother Lester looks after point of sale and marketing and his brother-in-law is responsible for full commercial construction and fit out. The company began making furniture just using a panel saw and drilling machine. Today, the amount of machinery has been multiplied, with a mix of commercial joinery and furniture projects as well as full construction and fit out. Employing 10 staff on the floor and another 11 in the office, Adaptive Interiors has continually been growing over the years. The last two years had been the years of significant changes, in particular with the investment in new processing equipment.

Countless overtime hours and tight delivery times have affected the productions costs for many small to medium sized cabinet making companies. "Our project work increased and we couldn't keep up without doing ridiculously long hours", William remembers. Both the storage and the CNC have played an important role in reshaping the company. "By having the right machinery to refine the whole production process, we are finally able to increase our capacity and margin."

With the Homag Automation TLF210, Adaptive has purchased a stand-alone storage system without a connection to any other machine. "It revolutionises the way we think about joinery and furniture making in three major areas: safety, productivity and cleanliness," says William. "It makes the factory operations flow smoothly."

A cornerstone for smart waste management

Homag Australia's salesman Grant Jones says, "The main reason for Adaptive to invest in the new TLF210 was to

manage their off-cuts. Our task was to intelligently manage all these off-cuts by placing a high priority on these parts. Due to the very high material cost using these off-cuts more efficiently will save Adaptive significant money." The Homag Automation storage system recycles off-cuts by automatically updating lists of all available off-cuts in real time. Grant gives an example, "When only half a sheet is needed for cutting, the storage system returns the other half into the system where it is registered as an off-cut. It will be accorded priority to be used first when the next suitable job comes along."



Before installing the intelligent storage system, the workshop looked a bit untidy and often hazardous, William says with a laugh, and continues, "Dad kept all the scraps and they were lying around in the factory. Now, if any off-cuts do not get stored daily in the Bargstedt, they are worthless and are binned. Our general housekeeping has changed massively."

Improved safety and time management

In addition to the intelligent waste management, the overall safety has improved for Adaptive Interiors. Having once had an incident caused by lifting load from the ground with a forklift, the business not only had to cope with injured staff but also with loss of work time. "Now there is no manual lifting required anymore. This saves us money, too."

Cabinet makers are increasingly confronted with tight lead times and the need to be highly flexible. William sees

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▶ growing customer expectations, especially in regards to delivery times and lower volume work. "We also take on little jobs and are known for being highly flexible which has been a winning argument for us in the past. I want to continue this reputation. Word-of-mouth in the local area is huge as well as within our rising number of clients in Sydney and Canberra."

CNC and software for customised work

Predicting a significant increase in project work in the next years, Adaptive Interiors sees the needs to stay ahead of the game. Therefore, the purchase of the Weeke CNC processing centre was aimed "to step up" as William explains. "Nearly all project work has to be done really fast and the speed of the Weeke was a powerful argument for us."

In addition to the machinery, the Wagga Wagga based company has also invested in Cut Rite, the optimisation software package of the Homag Group. It comes in a modular design and it generates data for cutting components on saws and nesting machines. Highlights include a board library, a calculation system of material costs and label creation in the office that also includes a layout editor.

The customised system is easy to operate. However, if there is some uncertainty, Homag's technicians make sure to train everyone to the highest standard. "Homag's service and software support is amazing and their staff's knowledge very impressive. They trained me and my brother very well so we were able to provide training to the rest of our staff."

Further business development

William is enthusiastic about the value the software has added to the business, "We optimise a lot of jobs. The way how we now control our stock by just clicking a button is unreal. The information goes directly to the storage. With Cut Rite, material can be saved and the production time cut short." He continues, "Cut Rite has taken us to a next level of smart manufacturing and that's where the money is. It gives us the opportunity to develop our own products and provide a whole package solution customised for the client with locally made products – and that is where we want to see our business going to."

Since leaving school in 2007, for William the Australian manufacturing industry hasn't got easier but "continuous improvement" has been a major driving force and a high priority. Now, 8 years later, Adaptive Interiors has grown to a smart manufacturer in New South Wales that stays ahead of the game to achieve a healthy cash flow.



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