

CASE STUDY

Flexible OEM Accessories Packaging

Today's private cars consist of 12,000 separate parts on average. Car manufacturers place huge demands on suppliers, from product development to shipment. In order to package OEM supplier parts more efficiently, the Austrian company ACR GmbH sought a highly 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 recognise their sunshades, headlights or wind deflector components.

Manual Packaging

In the past, ACR's own employees manually packaged the accessory parts the company manufactures. However, after accepting a major OEM contract, a search began for a more efficient solution in the packaging area. Wolfgang Reiter, Project Management head explains: 'Naturally we're especially interested in economic viability and cost effectiveness. Instead of just hiring more employees for the packaging area, we sought a partially automatic solution.' However, the system had to be extremely flexible to cope with packaging varying quantities of a wide range of products. 'We sometimes package orders consisting of 100 items and other times 20,000 items. These are often batched with up to 15 part numbers. Even the item lists are quite different,' Wolfgang Reiter continues. Luckily the company from Upper Austria caught up with Automated Packaging Systems (APS) at the interpack trade show. APS is a leading producer of packaging systems for small parts and the developer of the bag-on-a-roll.

Flexible System Discovered

'We are familiar with the products of APS' rivals,' Wolfgang Reiter explains. 'But we went with this company because its systems are very flexible during operation and it doesn't take long to switch from one pouch size to another. APS machine 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 using a stream of air. A touchscreen 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 and machine-monitoring functions. The operator can switch over the pouch size in less than two minutes. Finally, an integrated diagnostic tool and the replace-and-repair module ensure 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 Bag-on-a-Roll



By using the PS 125 tabletop bagger ordered for packing smaller production volumes, 25 pouches per minute can be packed in continuous mode. The bagger, which only weighs 37 kg, needs merely 56 x 48 cm of installation area. Pouches that are 50–265 mm wide and 100–450 mm long can be filled by hand and sealed automatically using the PS 125.

System Integration and Interface

The ACR specialists developed their own system to supply products to the APS bagging system AB 180. It was seamlessly connected by PLC to the AB 180. Like the thermal transfer printer, all APS baggers have both separate USB ports and parallel and serial ports for this purpose. Consequently, an external connection can be established to PCs, notebooks or proprietary IT systems to transmit data and the baggers 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. Preparatory work ensures the printer has the right text, graphics and barcode data to print onto pouches. This means the company can implement several label formats based on specific customer requirements.

ACR now processes approximately 300,000 Autobag pouches per year. Flexibility is even required where pouch size is concerned. 'Sometimes we pack a 200 batch in a medium-sized pouch format, then a 150 batch in a large format and then another 500 product batches in a small pouch size. APS responds very quickly if we need pouches,' project manager Reiter adds.

ACR is currently considering using an additional Autobag AB 180 bagging system. Wolfgang Reiter sums it up: 'We have achieved a considerable productivity edge with the APS bagging system and have a stronger market presence. We are very pleased with this packaging solution and if demand increases further, we will go with this system again.'

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