

CASE STUDY

Morris Quality Bakers Testimonial

Background

Morris Quality Bakers is North West England's finest bakery, delivering morning goods, breads and specialities such as Eccles cakes and confectionaries from its bakery in Coppull near Chorley, Lancashire, to customers as far a field as Cumbria in the north and Staffordshire in the south. It handles more than 12,000 orders a week from small sandwich businesses to local authorities and supermarkets. Now, thanks to investment in two FAS SPrint Revolution™ bagging systems, it's expanded its product range, improved packing efficiency, increased capacity and enabled customers to reduce food waste.

The rise of Morris Quality Bakers is founded not on bread and cake, but on meat and pies. In 1912, two years before the outbreak of World War I, Walter Morris left his job at the Co-operative to set up as an independent butcher in Coppull. Two generations on, the business continues to thrive and remains in Morris hands; in 1973 Henry Morris, Walter's grandson, took over and swapped three joints of meat for his first pie block, sparking a chain of events which has seen the business change and grow year on year.

The decision to focus on bakery goods came in the mid-90s, in the face of increasingly restrictive food safety regulations. Today Morris Quality Bakers employs 170 local people and operates a fleet of more than 50 vans; it remains a thriving family business with Henry Morris and wife Christine at the helm.

The Challenge

"We were packing our tea cakes by hand," explains bakery general manager Carl Green, "which limited throughput but gave us flexibility and a guarantee of quality. When Henry put QUALITY into the company name, it was more than just a word. We invite all our customers to come and see the care we take in baking, packing and shipping our products, and they recognise value when they see it. I hadn't found a system that was right for our levels of output and could increase packing speed without compromising pack quality until I spotted the FAS SPrint Revolution on Automated Packaging Systems' website."

Before the change the Morris bakers were packing 12 5" tea cakes into a polyprop film bag and affixing a pre-printed label that was overprinted with batch data. After contacting Automated Packaging Systems' food specialist Malcolm Vale, Carl Green and Henry Morris made the trip to the FAS SPrint Revolution demo suite in Malvern, Worcestershire, and took a selection of product with them.



Company Name

Morris Quality Bakers

Products Being Packaged

Morning goods, breads and specialities

Equipment Used

FAS SPrint Revolution™

Custom Integration

FAS SPrint Revolution did not require custom integration for this application.

Materials Used

SidePouch® bags

Return on Investment

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The Solution

"We set-up the FAS SPrint Revolution and ran some samples," explains Malcolm Vale. "The potential was clear from the start - we were offering them a system that combined the benefits of hand packing - careful, precise and delicate handling - with the speed of automation - pre-opened bags, auto closure and more."

Carl Green agrees: "The system is compact, robust and the build quality was good, and there was plenty of space in the loading area. The work height was ideal and the design made it easy to put the tea cakes into bags. We needed a second session; Malcolm organised for some sample bags to be made up in the correct size so the tea cakes could be packed snugly, helping keep them in perfect condition during storage and transit."

The Business Case

Henry Morris took receipt of the first FAS SPrint in Spring 2014: "We don't budget for capital expenditure on an annual basis. If something makes sense - and this did - then we'll do it. This system will give us a return on investment within a year, largely because it has enabled us to increase throughput significantly. We've been able to produce up to 2,500 packs of 12 tea cakes in a day which is a substantial increase on what we could achieve beforehand."

"As important as the numbers are, this bagging system's done more than increase productivity and throughput. The materials team at Malvern, for example, offered us bags with zip-locks and a tamper-evident tear-off strip. By switching from non-resealable six-packs to easy-open zip-lock packs of 12 we've made it easier for caterers. The zip-lock bags mean they can easily keep rolls fresh overnight, reducing catering waste and helping them cut costs.

"Printing product and batch information directly onto the bag instead of using a label has saved time and cost; a saving that's helped offset the cost of our new zip-lock bags. And the team that uses the machine love it - it's physically easier for them and, as a result, we have a happier workforce."

The FAS SPrint Revolution has enabled the bakery to redeploy labour. Previously a team of four could bag and label 200 packs of 12 tea cakes per hour. Today they can pack twice as much product in a bag, twice as fast, and with half the number of people.

The system is working so well that Morris Quality Bakers has ordered a second FAS SPrint Revolution, just three months after taking receipt of its first. Carl Green explains: "It's opened up new possibilities and, as a result, we've added some new lines to our product range. Four years ago we introduced mini paninis for schools - Poco Paninis we call them - and they've been a great hit. Now we bag them into resealable zip-lock bags of 25, which means the new bagger is in demand throughout the bakery."

Morris Quality Bakers maintenance supervisor Bryan Rowland worked with Malcolm Vale and the Automated Packaging Systems service and support team lead by Jim Lockyear to commission and install the original FAS SPrint Revolution.

Brian Rowlands is the team leader responsible for training and maintenance of the system. As Malcolm Vale explains, the system has been customised since installation to improve efficiency still further. "In semi-automated mode the FAS SPrint Revolution is managed with a foot switch, but Brian and his colleagues felt a hand-operated mechanism would be quicker and easier. The simple, open design meant he could make the modification with ease."

Conclusion

By mid-2014 Morris Quality Bakers will be operating two FAS SPrint Revolution systems, bagging morning goods into resealable tamper-evident multi-packs that keep product fresher for longer and substantially reduce food waste. The systems are increasing throughput by 100% and at the same time cutting labour requirement in half to release manpower for deployment elsewhere in the bakery to increase output.

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