

CASE STUDY

Kit Bagging

Background

Prysmian is at the high tech end of communications, supplying optical network solutions to meet the world's increasing appetite for faster broadband, VoIP, Video on Demand and the like. Its advances in technology are backed by more than a century of experience matching investment in R&D with equal measures of commitment to customer service and quality.

From Prysmian's UK facility in Eastleigh, Hampshire, it manufactures, packs and dispatches the fibre optic cable, splicing, patching and terminal kits needed to bring high speed communication into our homes.

Its customers are the big network operators, and when their engineers are on-site fitting multi-dwelling units in new builds, for example, there is no room for error and no excuse for delays. That's why fast, efficient, reliable, traceable kit packing is a priority for Prysmian, as materials planner Alan Phelps explains.

The Challenge

"We used to hand bag the fixings for our kits. On average we could pack two standard kits a minute, each containing a couple of screws, screw caps and rawl plugs. But with demand increasing, kit bagging was commonly a bottle neck.

The Solution

"In 2011 we switched to a semi-automated system and increased productivity three-fold overnight - a custom-engineered Automated Packaging Systems Autobag AB 180 with a Maximizer loading area for added flexibility."

Prysmian's Autobag AB 180 bagging system is fitted with a Comcount twin-bowl feeder which counts and dispenses rawl plugs and screws. The system was engineered in Worcester by a team of specialist engineers led by Comcount managing director Martin Brewer.

Company Name

Prysmian - Supplying optical network solutions to meet the world's increasing appetite for faster broadband, VoIP, Video on Demand and the like.

Products Being Packaged

Fibre optic cable, splicing, patching and terminal kits

Equipment Used

Autobag® AB 180™

Custom Integration

Autobag® AB 180™ bagging system is fitted with a Comcount twin-bowl feeder and Maximizer conveyor.

Materials Used

Autobag® pre-opened Bags-on-a-Roll

Return on Investment

The system delivers savings of around £19,000 per annum, achieving a return on investment in under two years.



"The Prysmian team came to see us with their Automated Packaging Systems area sales manager Martyn Walker," explains Martin Brewer, "and they brought with them some sample kits. Having understood their set-up and looked at the full range of kits they needed to pack, we specified an Autobag AB 180 with twin bowls carefully calibrated to accurately and reliably dispense rawl plugs and screws. We ran tests to establish the size and treatment of the bowls to guarantee performance, and added in a Maximizer with a load tray so they could easily cope with 4 more kit parts including cable ties which are notoriously difficult to pack with a semi-automated system."

The Results

The AB 180 has been packing around 50 lines for almost two years, reliably and, above all, cost effectively. As well as increasing productivity - rates are up from two kits per minute to seven - the system delivers savings of around £19,000 per annum, achieving a return on investment in under two years.

Just as importantly, according to Alan Phelps, the system's properly sealed bags have eradicated some quality issues and improved traceability. And the system provided is exceptionally easy to use.

"We pack kits to store to ensure that we can keep lead times short. The AB 180 is packing up to 420 kits per hour and yet it's incredibly easy to use. We rely on a mix of permanent and contract labour to maintain flexibility, and we can train a new operator on the bagging system in minutes. It's quick and easy to switch bags, and the bowl feeders and Maximizer tray help us ensure kit quality."

"As well as the semi-automated system we've also got a desktop Autobag PS 125 OneStep that's used to pack one-off kits and smaller runs. The PS 125 OneStep allows us to print directly onto the finished pack which looks professional and improves traceability. It sits alongside the team that builds our splicing and patching kits and offers us the same quality and traceability as the AB 180 but, because of its small footprint, can be kept close to hand."

Automated Packaging Systems' Martyn Walker recalls the original challenge: "It was clear from the start that Prysmian wasn't planning to test the AB 180's speed or volume capabilities. Prysmian wanted the system because it guaranteed confidence - the AB 180 could ensure every kit contained the right items, offered a secure seal and was flexible enough to cope with 50+ kit lines without the need for an engineer on standby. We've been delighted - but not surprised - that it's performing so well and has achieved pay-back within two years."

The Future

Prysmian will continue to invest in the future, knowing that practical systems such as the AB 180 ensure its advances are backed by quality and service. In 2013 Prysmian will have completed a new test laboratory for high voltage cabling and continues to be the market leader in fire proof cabling designed to keep the emergency lights on in burning buildings. Its plans for a new compound plant in 2014 suggest that after 130 years in business, there is still much to be achieved.

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