Packaging Stimulus

SEW-EURODRIVE PROVIDES ECONOMIC SOLUTIONS FOR HARTNESS INTERNATIONAL

Few industries are experiencing change quite as fast as the packaging arena. Lighter-weight containers are being introduced to reduce costs and energy use, packaging is being redesigned to attract consumer attention and manufacturers are using fewer materials in an effort to address environmental concerns.

Hartness International, a manufacturer of packaging equipment for bottling and material handling, makes it a point to stay close to the customer in such a fluid environment, where new demands are being made every day. The company has equipment in more than 160 countries and all 50 states. Three generations of the Hartness family are active in the business, and more than 450 employees are located around the world, including a network of service professionals whose primary job is to keep customers up and running at all times.

Hartness International manufactures equipment for bottling and material handling applications (courtesy of SEW).

Innovative product developments have led Hartness to form new divisions within the organization that focus on integration, robotics, automation, conveyors and production performance.

"Our customers want to go to one-source for an integrated packaging line solution, and that means we have to continually evolve to stay competitive," says Robert Beesley, engineering manager at Hartness. "Since packaging is always changing, the systems we build are highly customized."

The company's latest shrink wrapping system reflects the continuing evolution of the packaging industry. "Our GlobalShrink film-only multi-packers and tray former shrink wrappers are especially useful for manufacturers selling to club stores such as Wal-Mart, Sam's Club and Costco," Beesley says.

Hartness eliminates complex control schemes in favor of systems that are easy to operate and maintain. Lean engineering principles and cellular manufacturing techniques enable the company to build a new machine in as little as 12 weeks from purchase order to shipment. The company even makes many of its own parts, with steel that is laser cut at its Greenville, SC plant.

"This gives us a lot of flexibility," Beesley says. "If we can draw it, we can cut it."

Responding quickly to the latest customer requests is the foundation of the company's success, according to Beesley. Hartness is constantly testing and

re-engineering equipment to handle new container designs, materials and packaging approaches. With every machine built to order and speed a critical factor, Hartness expects the same kind of responsive service from its suppliers.

"SEW has become the standard for gearmotors in the packaging industry," Beesley says. "Not only is the quality and reliability of their products very high, but they also offer a wide range of sizes and torques and they build the order very fast."

Since all SEW products are modular, Hartness is able to use different components to engineer solutions for several applications. Examples include connecting SEW gear reducers to servo drives when more precise positioning or higher acceleration is needed, or using an SEW gearmotor with encoder feedback as an economical alternative to servos in applications that don't require high acceleration, such as filler machines.

Hartness is the first OEM in the United States to use energy-efficient motors from SEW on equipment being sold to Australia, where strict energy efficiency standards are enforced. SEW has developed an encapsulated motor where the stator is completely filled with epoxy resin. This non-porous material replaces the air that normally surrounds the stator windings. By keeping moisture and cleaning agents from reaching the windings, the resin prevents motor failure. It's an innovation that's been especially important for keeping machines running reliably in breweries, dairies and other washdown environments where the liquids are corrosive.

"Before we started using SEW gearmotors we had to buy the motor and reducer and integrate it ourselves. This took more design and assembly time, and occupied more space," Beesley says. "SEW provides us a more convenient, economical solution that has helped us make machines smaller and more reliable."

When new gearmotor sizes were required for machines scheduled to ship from the Hartness facility in Anzio, Italy, SEW had the gearmotors quickly assembled in Germany and flown to Rome. When a truck could not be secured, SEW hired several taxis to deliver them to Anzio in time to meet the customer's delivery date.

"Like Hartness, SEW is a family-owned company that has built its reputation on delivering exceptional quality and service," Beesely says. "We both do whatever it takes to satisfy the customer."

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SEW motors keep moisture and cleaning agents from reaching the windings (courtesy of SEW).

Hartness International was the first OEM in the United States to use SEW's energy efficient motors (courtesy of SEW).