



# Automating production lines brings a host of benefits

**When processes are out of date and your level of efficiency is not optimal it might be time to consider automation. Not only will this reduce labor costs but it will also speed up production – and in the end it will allow you to offer a superior quality product at a lower cost.**

New York-based contract cosmetics manufacturer **Mana Products** designs, manufactures and supplies cosmetics to some of the biggest names in the industry, including L’Oreal, Clinique, Estee Lauder, Fenty Beauty, and Bobby Brown, on top of manufacturing and selling its own brand globally. By automating production lines, the company has not just reduced labor costs but also streamlined and optimized production processes.

## **Why automation?**

There were a number of reasons Mana Products decided to automate. One of the biggest reasons was to **reduce labor costs**: introducing each automated cartoner allowed the company to free up five of their resources and allocate them from the production line to other departments. Increasing the quality of product was also a big reason: through

automation, Mana was able to ensure **product consistency**, something that is tremendously important in the cosmetics industry.

## **Benefits of automation**

Introducing automated cartoners has had a big impact on a number of areas: production lines are more controlled, speed has increased exponentially, and the scrap rate has been significantly reduced.

“When we were working manually the scrap rate was anywhere from 10-12%. By automating, we were able to reduce it down to 2%,” explains Sanjay Kumar, Vice President Engineering, Mana Products. “Material, movement, and products have been flawless because now that we have automated our production line, and we are better able to control the flow. We can now 100% guarantee that things like labels and lot codes are perfectly placed on the carton, and the speed of our cartoning has gone up significantly. With manual cartoning, we could do maybe 20-25 pieces per minute. With automation, we are now able to do about 60 pieces per minute – so, basically a **300% increase**, which is great for a healthy bottom line.”

That **healthy bottom line** applies to both Mana and to their customers. Reducing costs while increasing speed and raising the

level of precision means that not only can Mana pass on those savings to customers, they are also able to increase output.

“Our customers are really happy,” says Sanjay Kumar from Mana Products. “With automation we are able to reduce lead times and offer **faster delivery**. So, basically, we are able to deliver a better, **higher quality** product faster, which means our customers can serve their customers better. There’s a real knock-on effect that benefits everyone.”

Mana says safety is very important to them, so it’s a big benefit that all moving parts are enclosed, with **safety** screens that have to be secured in place for the machine to operate. Should these conditions not be in place, Kalix cartoner is programmed to shut down. Mana says that they have not had a single accident since they switched over to automation.

## **Optimized Footprint**

Going from a manual line to a fully automated one has optimized and reduced Mana’s footprint because the company can now combine many processes.

“**We can do a lot of things simultaneously**, which means we don’t need to occupy unnecessary space,” explains Michael Mikil, Project Engineer, Mana Products. “For example, inside the cartoning process we have been able to add leaflet



*Image: One of the surprising features in KP machines from the French company Citus Kalix. You may run a variety of products of different sizes in one machine. The example in the image is a large perfume package and a small promotional gift packed in the same machine.*

insertion, as well as lot code embossing on the carton. Previously, we had to do everything in a sequence, meaning one operator had to open the carton, pass it to another operator to insert the product, and then to another operator to insert the leaflet, then another to close it, then align it for the printer... it was a huge production line and a long inefficient process. Being able to do everything in one automated cartoner means we went from 7-8 meters of space down to 2 meters. This translated into an **80% space usage reduction.**"

The versatility and flexibility of the automated cartoning machines have also been a big benefit in terms of product portfolio diversification. Mana is now able to run products with leaflets, without leaflets, with liners, without liners, set different dimensions... essentially, they can adjust their line to meet the specific needs of a customer and also add features, such as affixing the machine to equipment they already have. The machine is portable, so it's easy to be moved around and to integrate.

#### **Citus Kalix: the perfect cartoning automation partner**

Mana Products spoke with a number of companies offering automated cartoning machines but ultimately chose Citus Kalix for a number of very positive reasons.

"This has been a big investment for our company," says Sanjay Kumar. "One of the big reasons we chose Citus Kalix was that the **changeover** is much faster than competitors – 25% faster, in fact. The machines are also very user friendly: the menus are clearly written, all the operations and adjustments are easy to understand and operate, and the majority of adjustments are tool-free. We're also able to connect the machines to the upstream and downstream equipment.

Technically speaking, the Citus Kalix cartoners are equipped with all the protocols we require."

Another big reason Mana chose Citus Kalix is the level of support.

"We get all the **technical support** we need - key factor when we started this journey" Michael Mikil explains. "We needed some help to better understand how the machines worked, and what the limitations were. On multiple occasions Citus Kalix helped us by providing recommendations based on their experience, which really helped us in terms of support optimization. Because of this, we have been able to go back to customers and tell them that if they modified this or that dimension, we could easily automate the whole production line for them, saving our customers both time and money."

According to Mana, the local support offered by Citus Kalix meant they could get help on short notice, which is a critical factor to their operations.

#### **A long-lasting partnership**

Mana was able to utilize the Citus Kalix KP600 Automated Cartoner machine to automate their lipstick assembly operation. This allowed them to increase their production capacity and quality of their lipstick products while reducing costs. Integrating the KP600 with the company's lipstick filling process was easy.

"Once we successfully implemented and achieved our goal with one cartoner, we were able to purchase additional cartoners and continue our automation of additional Lipstick assembly," says Sanjay Kumar. "The decision to automate was taken in 2014, with implementation beginning in 2015. Currently, about 60-65% of our lines are automated and we expect to be fully automated in just a few more years." □

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