



“Refurbishing the CK80 filling machine was like refurbishing an old car: you love the car, it has served you well, you know exactly how it works and how it responds to your ‘orders’ – so instead of replacing it you strip down the motor and rebuild it with new inner working, giving it a whole new second life” image: Citus Kalix at Chicago Packexpo 2018

Replace or repair? Give Your Machine a New Lease on Life

When a tube filling machine has been on your line for a long time – sometimes decades – even the heartiest amongst them can start to run out of steam. At that point, you need to make a decision: order a new filling machine and retrain your staff – or refurbish the one you already have, saving time, money, and manpower. France’s Farmaclair chose the option that fitted their needs best.

Farmaclair, which specializes in the manufacture of pharmaceutical and cosmetic liquids, gels, pastes, and other products, owns a Citus Kalix 80 tube filling machine made in 1989. In the three decades since then the machine has performed well and been a trusted part of the production line.

It was in January of this year that Farmaclair understood that after 30 years the CK80 might be reaching the end of its natural lifespan.

“We had several problems that we needed to address,” explains Antoine Fayet, Engineering Manager, Farmaclair. “First, we were not just using plastic tubes as we had been doing previously. Instead, we were also working with polyfoil tubes, which the KX80 was by then not optimized to handle. In January two technicians from Citus Kalix

came and installed the polyfoil format on the machine.

“Once the polyfoil tube format was installed on the machine, though, it started running slow. It was running about 24 pieces per minute, when we knew it should have had the capability of doing between **60 and 80 tubes a minute**. At that point we needed to understand our options, because we already had orders that we needed to fill during the calendar year.”

The Options

Once Farmaclair understood the problems it knew had two options – replace or repair – and each option had both pros and cons. Replacing the machine meant ordering a new one, which would mean having another machine with a long lifespan that could handle modern demands. The drawbacks, though, were that it would take several

months to be delivered and then, when it arrived, the technical staff would have to be trained on the new specs.

The second option was to refurbish it, which meant that while the extended lifespan would not be equal to that of a new machine, the lead time was around two weeks, and once it was up and running the technical staff already knew how it worked so it could be put back into service right away.

“We needed to make 2-4 million units on this line for our customers but waiting for a new machine to be delivered and then training the technical staff on how it operated meant we would fall behind,” says Fayet. “We understood the machine we already had and what it was capable of doing, so when the Citus Kalix team explained how a refurbishment would work we knew this was the direction in which to go.”



The Result

It took about two weeks for the refurbishment of the Citus Kalix 80 filling machine to be completed. Once the work was finished, Farmaclair was quickly back up to speed, producing 60-80 units per minute.

“We were extremely happy with the results,” says Fayet. “The machine was up and working quickly and we were able to **raise our OEE** to the level we required. Post-refurbishment we had an initial issue with tube leakage but once the jaws were properly aligned we were back in business full-time.

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Citus Kalix Support

Farmaclair says the Citus Kalix team was easy to reach and easy to work with, and once the work started it was efficiently carried out.

“We got the support we needed, which was very important to us,” explains Fayet. “The machine was being audited, the options were clearly laid out, and we were able to



Image: Farmaclair says the Citus Kalix team was easy to reach and easy to work with, and once the work started it was efficiently carried out.

make an informed decision based on the advice given. This meant that we did not have a lot of down time and even when there was a small problem it was quickly resolved.”

The Future

This is the first machine Farmaclair has refurbished but the company says it probably won't be the last.

“We have invested a lot of money into our line and we understand that refurbishment

is a great way to extend the life of the machine, while also ensuring it will not be out of service for too long,” Fayet says. “These machines are complex and once we order one it can take time to be delivered, so refurbishment is the smart choice from a number of perspectives, including time, money, and staff competence, so absolutely we will do this again.”

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