Case study

Bretting develops new controls platform for napkin, interfold towel and tissue machine lines

Planning and partnerships lead to success on export machine series

C.G. Bretting Manufacturing Company Inc. has been in business for over 120 years, serving the OEM paper converting industry and providing contract manufacturing services for more than 60 years. Bretting is located in Ashland, Wisconsin on the southern shores of Lake Superior. The fourth generation of the Bretting family leads the business today, while the fifth generation is currently on deck.

OEM paper converting equipment converts rolls of paper into folded and rolled products such as napkins, interfolded napkins, singlefold facial tissue, multifold paper toweling, kitchen towel rolls and bathroom tissue rolls. Bretting is an industry leader in global sales and service of OEM paper converting equipment. Machines are designed, manufactured, assembled and tested at the Ashland factory, prior to shipping to the customer’s site for set-up and commissioning.

Bretting recently delivered its first paper converting machine controlled entirely by Siemens hardware and software. The project was a major undertaking for Bretting, Siemens and Standard Electric (local Siemens distributor) and was deemed a great success, according to Dave Vedder, director of engineering, C.G. Bretting. “Planning and partnerships with our vendors were keys to our success on this first 41-axis Siemens-controlled machine. We planned for success and achieved it. The project started more than 24 months prior to delivery of the machine to the customer.”

Vedder continued to explain the process.
“The project started with listening to our customers, who had been requesting Siemens automation on our equipment for some time. Meeting customer needs is a Bretting strength. We realized it was time to act. The Bretting Leadership Team commissioned an effort to provide an acceptable solution. That solution comprised Simotion motion controllers, Sinamics drives and Simatic PLC.”

The purchasing department then met with the local distributor, Standard Electric. Meetings were organized with Standard Electric, Siemens and Bretting within several weeks. It was determined the products and software available would satisfy the full range of Bretting machine functionality and other requirements:

- The establishment of partnerships, along with clarification of pricing, delivery, support and inventory levels
- Small dedicated R&D lab for training, programming and testing
- Training for field service, hardware engineers and software programmers
- First Machine Support for engineering, programming, build, startup and full commissioning in the field.

A formal customer inquiry for a new machine followed about six months later. The inquiry included a requirement for a full Siemens automation solution on the customer’s new paper converting machine. Bretting, Siemens and Standard Electric were now well prepared and ready to respond, Vedder explained. Proposals for the machine with full Siemens automation solutions were shared with the customer. A new set of planning protocols was started, one that focused specifically on the first Bretting paper converting machine to be equipped entirely with the new vendor’s products and software onboard. First machine planning included:

- Siemens hardware and software engineering coaching
- Bill of Material reviews
- Schedules for parts ordering and delivery
- Machine build support
- Machine startup support
- Machine installation in the field support
- Warranty and field issue support process

The customer ordered the machine approximately six months after the initial inquiry. The plans for the first machine were approved and authorized for production. Some checks and adjustments were required during the machine engineering and build process. “The combined talents of Siemens, Standard Electric and Bretting addressed and resolved any issues as they occurred,” Dave Vedder explained. “The customer approved the machine during the Final Machine Checkout process. The time from Order to Checkout was similar to other machines we’ve produced during recent years.”

The machine was then disassembled and shipped to the customer’s site in Europe. The reassembly, startup and final commissioning proceeded without issue. The machine is currently running successfully in the field, with no significant service issues reported, according to Vedder.

Planning and partnership were key to the success of this first export paper converting machine with Siemens automation onboard, all made possible by the combined efforts of the machine builder, the controls supplier and the local value-adding electrical distributor.

Bretting is an ISO9001:2008 Certified manufacturer with sales representatives worldwide.