Plant Practices: DMP Tackles Assembly Issues

In 1975, DMP was at the forefront of digital communications in the security industry, and today continues to set standards with its networked intrusion, fire and access control products.

The Lista Arlink 8000 workstations at DMP proved to be accommodating when the company needed to reevaluate its assembly flow.

Founded in 1975, Digital Monitoring Products (DMP) [1]is a recognized leader in network solutions for fast, cost-effective, centralized security monitoring in applications of every size. The company was at the forefront of digital communications in the security industry, and today continues to set standards with its networked intrusion, fire and access control products. DMP is the only independently owned security company that manufactures all products in the United States.

The company's manual assembly or insertion line is used to handle insertion of odd-form components—those that cannot be machine-inserted. For more than five years, Arlink® 8000 workstations from Lista International Corp. had served as the central element in DMP's manual product assembly.

Recently, problems were starting to stack up for David Peebles, DMP's VP of manufacturing, on some of his final assembly lines. The manual final assembly line configuration was resulting in stacks of partially assembled products piling up, bringing productivity to a halt. Peebles needed to incorporate a more progressive

assembly system to address this problem, optimize efficiencies and prepare the assembly department for future growth and expansion.

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According to Peebles, "Lista's Arlink 8000 [2]wears well, and has the flexibility we needed to transition from what was essentially a batch final assembly process to a higher volume progressive assembly concept."

Lista's Arlink 8000 modular workstations [2] are specifically designed to accommodate changing or future needs. They can be configured in a variety of heights and lengths, and feature a unique "starter and adder" system with optional back-to-back configurations that enables unlimited layouts to adapt to any space or support any process requirements. Also, the workstation's Definite Positioning System™ makes relocating or adjusting worksurfaces, storage, shelving, lights, power beams, or footrests, among others, an option that proves fast, easy and safe.

After researching a number of different options, Peebles determined that the best method for attaining continuous material flow would be to incorporate conveyor belts into DMP's assembly lines and Arlink workstations. Specifically, Peebles selected a conveyor solution from SmartMove® of Fall River, MA. SmartMove manufactures simple, plug-in, modular plastic chain belt conveyors that are designed to increase efficiency in assembly, inspection, packaging and testing applications.

Peebles was particularly impressed with the speed at which the new progressive assembly lines took shape. "We started installing the first line one evening," he recalled. "I left for the day, and arrived the next morning expecting to spend a few hours explaining what we had in mind to our team. I was shocked to see that the assembly line was already in full production. Also the combination of the modular Arlink workstation and the SmartMove conveyor allowed us to easily reconfigure two 48' lines into three 32' lines, without any disruptions."

Each 32' line is comprised of eight 4' long sections that are easy to maneuver and

switch out. The workstations hold different colored plastic bins which, based on what the technicians are building that day, can be moved around to accommodate positioning and size needs. To eliminate debilitating workflow pile-ups and breakdowns, the new system also features electronic eyes that stop the conveyor lines and provide instant notification if a problem is encountered.

According to Peebles, the improvements in the final assembly department have been quite dramatic, and easy to quantify.

He said, “From that first day of the new installation, we witnessed a 30 percent improvement in productivity. We’ve also seen improvements in employee morale, as they’ve told me on a number of occasions how much they enjoy working in their new environment.”

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