

CUSTOMER SUCCESS

CLIENT
AAGARD

LOCATION
ALEXANDRIA, MN



[Ross Feller, Aagard]

ROBOTICS SOLUTION IS THE FUTURE OF PACKAGING

Robots aren't just some futuristic sci-fi thing from a movie. They are the future of the packaging industry.

Alexandria, MN, based end-of-line packaging equipment supplier, Aagard, has teamed up with Van Meter Inc. to create a piece of equipment, featuring the Comau unified robot, that showcases what's possible now and in the future.

CHALLENGE

Aagard works with customers across a wide variety of industries, including food and beverage, ammunition, and home goods, designing customized machines to meet each clients' packaging needs.

"Everything you see in a store had to get there somehow, and so it had to be produced," explained Ross Feiler, Lead Applications Engineer at Aagard. "And then there's this whole piece in the middle where it has to be packaged so it can be shipped, so that it can be displayed, and so that it can be sold. And we kind of take that middle part of how is it packaged, and we solve that problem."

Feiler and the Aagard team have found that many of their customers share the same types of challenges: limited space and inefficient and inflexible equipment.

"Many times our customers are working in old plants with limited space," said Feiler, "so we've got to take the space that they have and come up with a whole solution... Another thing, the industry is pushing to smaller count in our cases, in our cartons, which correspondingly increases the rate of the equipment. And so it needs to go faster... Our customers are also demanding more flexibility. They want to be able to make changes to recipes. They want to run more sizes. And so typically those things all conflict. Our job is to find a way to bring all that together into a quality piece of equipment."

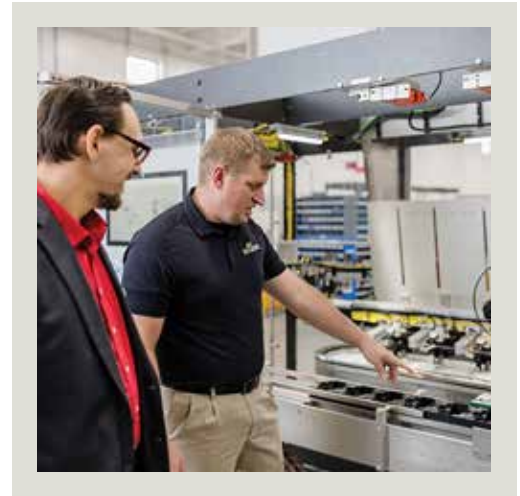
SOLUTION

One such quality piece of equipment is Aagard's futuristic showpiece, which utilizes a Comau unified robot, to demonstrate what's possible with robotics in the packaging industry.

This user-friendly piece of equipment allows a customer to pick multiple products at once and put corner boards on in a tight space, all under one programmable controller.

Van Meter Solution Architect Zach Dotson states, "This specific solution for Aagard is showcasing their flexibility and productivity."

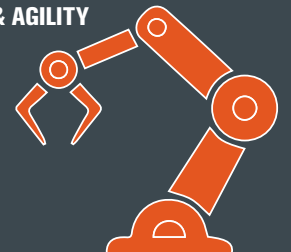
"As a result of those partnerships with both Van Meter and Rockwell Automation, this piece of equipment demonstrates several solutions in a small machine..." Feiler expanded. "What we are demonstrating is flavor combination—we're taking four different products and combining them in several different ways on demand as the customer requests. Another technology that's demonstrated is the smart cart technology from Rockwell, and that's needed on a lot of these equipment to have that flexibility. And the third technology that we're really excited about is the Rockwell-controlled



WORTH NOTING

FUTURISTIC SHOWPIECE DEMONSTRATES POSSIBILITIES IN PACKAGING INDUSTRY:

- FLAVOR COMBINATION
- FLEXIBILITY IN PACKAGING
- SPEED & AGILITY



Comau robot, and that's going to give us that flexibility in our ease of use for our customers."

The ease of use comes from the Comau robot not having a separate PLC (programmable logic controller) that would need a separate programming language and controller. Instead, it's controlled by Aagard's standard 5700 Allen-Bradley drives and in its main PLC, which makes it easy to program and use.

The Comau arm, 5700 Allen-Bradley drives, the enclosures, sensors and lighting for this special piece of equipment were supplied by Van Meter.

"Van Meter is a great partner," Feiler said. "As everyone knows, in the industry right now, it's difficult to get components, and so they worked with us to supply and provide most of the components on this equipment. And they're finding a way to get us the parts that we need on time, even though we all know that that's difficult in today's age."

Feiler continued, "Van Meter provides great support on the technical aspect as well. They partner with us, and when we've got a question, we bring them in and work through the solution."

THE RESULT

A desire to provide real solutions for their customers will continue to drive Van Meter and Aagard's partnership, and the packaging industry, into the future.

"It's a really great feeling not to just provide a machine that does a job," said Feiler, "but to work with our customers, to work with our vendors like Van Meter and Rockwell and actually fully understand the problem and really bring the right solution. And if you do that enough times, you start to change the industry."

"At the end of the day, my reputation relies on my ability to provide a solution and advise as needed," Dotson said. "So when I'm able to do that successfully, it's a great feeling knowing that I not only help my customer but their end user, and this machine will be going into a facility that's ultimately providing product for everybody in the world to use."

Dotson may have been speaking generally about all the machines he's helped create that have brought products to the world, but, perhaps, he was subconsciously foreshadowing. Someday soon, the Comau unified robot showpiece, or something like it, just might be putting the finishing touches on products all over the world.

"Rockwell and Van Meter provide components," said Feiler, "but more than that, they work with us to try to understand the market, work with us to try to understand what the future holds."



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- Ross Feiler, Aagard



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Aagard is an engineering company that builds custom packaging automation systems. Headquartered in Alexandria, MN, they provide turnkey packaging automation machines optimized for both space and future capabilities to customers in a wide variety of industries.

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Rockwell Automation is the world's largest provider of industrial automation whose brands include Allen-Bradley, FactoryTalk software and LifecycleIQ Services. Headquartered in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Rockwell Automation employs approximately 24,500 people and has customers in more than 100 countries worldwide.

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