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LIGHTENING LOADS

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MM Packaging:
revolutionising loading
processes with automation

“We faced a labour-intensive process of transporting finished goods from the factory to our nearby warehouse, which ran the risk of bottlenecks and inhibited our capacity to scale.”

David Whitworth
Operations Director at MMP Deeside

Joloda Hydraroll Ltd has worked with MM Packaging Deeside Ltd to design and implement an automated system to quickly load pallets onto the trailer at its factory and unload them into the nearby warehouse.

The new system has improved operational efficiency, accuracy, sustainability, and safety while building in capacity for growth. Unloading a trailer at the warehouse has been reduced from one hour to just three minutes.

innovation pioneers

MMP Deeside Ltd is a market leader in packaging production in Great Britain. It supplies blue chip companies mainly in the food and drink sector. MMP Deeside is part of MM Group, an international network of 64 locations across Europe, America, and Asia.

As consumers across markets turn to more sustainable and recyclable fibre-based packaging solutions, MMP Deeside is actioning a strategy to increase its competitive and innovative strength. The company has recently relocated to a plant three times the size of the previous premises and equipped it with the most modern printing, cutting, and finishing machines available to produce high-quality packaging.

MMP Deeside is pioneering a state-of-the-art facility for the Group where automation and innovation are central to scaling up production. To transport finished goods to the warehouse, it required a material handling process that could keep up with demand while ensuring accuracy, safety, and flexibility.

“The physicality of loading pallets every single day has been eliminated.”

David Whitworth
Operations Director at MMP Deeside

labour intensive processes

Operations Director at MMP Deeside, David Whitworth, explains: “When we purchased the plant in 2021, we invested in several areas of automation. However, we still faced a labour-intensive process of transporting finished goods from the factory to our nearby warehouse, which ran the risk of bottlenecks and inhibited our capacity to scale.”

The plant operates 24/7, producing high volumes of packaging transported to the warehouse on pallets. The warehouse is only a quarter of a mile away, but continually loading and unloading the pallets onto the trailers was very time-consuming. Typically, it would take one hour to load each trailer and then another hour to unload.

“Each pallet delivered into the loading bay at the end of its track would need to be manually scanned and then loaded onto the trailer using a forklift truck,” David says. “One forklift driver would process one pallet at a time until the trailer was full.”

As a result, forklifts were driven in and out of the factory every few minutes. The drivers had limited visibility entering and exiting through the factory door, so, for safety reasons, only one trailer could be loaded at a time.

“Once the trailer was full, it would be driven to the warehouse, where a forklift driver would unload each pallet from the trailer, scan it, and place it into storage,” David adds.



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David Whitworth
Operations Director at MMP Deeside

efficiency through automation

MMP Deeside sought to streamline operations by extending automation from the end of the production line through to the loading bay. After consultations with the MMP Deeside operations and IT teams and existing automation suppliers, Joloda Hydraroll designed and installed an automated trailer loading system that would create one seamless process.

At the factory, this comprised three dock lock/levelling mechanisms fitted to the front of the docks. An install enclosure was also fitted on the outside that could communicate with the trailers and the existing conveyor to enable indexing and loading of pallets two at a time. Three

trailers were equipped with Joloda Hydraroll Slipchain Trailer Systems to operate on the slipchain docks, each with capacity for 26 pallets.

Now, when a trailer pulls up at the factory loading area, it can be reversed onto the Joloda Hydraroll dock lock/levelling mechanism. The driver will plug in the power plug and controls, and the internal conveyor will load two pallets side by side. Once complete, the driver is alerted that the trailer is full. They can then unplug the trailer from the power/control source, close the doors, and drive it off the dock lock mechanism to the warehouse for unloading. In the meantime, the system automatically starts to fill the next trailer.



efficiency through automation

At the warehouse, two Joloda Hydraroll Slipchain Unloading Docks have been installed to receive the trailers. On arrival at the unloading area, the driver opens the rear doors, reverses the trailer onto the Joloda Hydraroll dock lock/ levelling mechanism, and plugs into the power and controls. A traffic light indicates that the trailer is in position and that unloading can begin. The driver then presses a button to start up both the trailer and slipchain dock, and all 26 pallets are unloaded from the rear in one smooth process. The total time to unload a trailer is now just three minutes.

As part of the loading process,” says David, “pallets are also automatically scanned once they reach a certain point on the slipchain. A visual of each shunt is brought up on the screen, showing us exactly which pallets are in the trailer. As the last two pallets enter, the door comes down and a delivery note is automatically emailed to the warehouse, thereby providing a fully traceable system.”



“We have achieved a fully automated process from the packing line to the palletiser, wrapping, loading the trailer and then unloading at the warehouse.”

David Whitworth
Operations Director at MMP Deeside

new industry standards

Implementing the automated loading and unloading system from Joloda Hydraroll has marked a significant operational shift for MMP Deeside, pioneering new advancements within the Group. The system was fully functioning from February 2023 and has since handled almost 100,000 pallets.

“With the automated system, the physicality of loading pallets every single day has been eliminated,” says David. “Stock accuracy has improved, with automatic labels ensuring precise inventory tracking. We have now achieved a fully automated process from the packing line to the palletiser, wrapping, loading the trailer and then unloading at the warehouse.”

By automating tasks previously completed using a forklift, MMP Deeside has significantly increased efficiency and reduced the risk of damaged or misplaced pallets. Less movement in the loading area has resulted in a safer work environment.

The system has also reduced the number of trailers and trucks required, leading to substantial cost savings and improved sustainability. It has optimised employee time and created scalability, allowing MMP Deeside to handle varying production volumes without compromising efficiency.



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Watch how MM Packaging revolutionised their loading processes...



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joloda.com

Joloda Hydraroll Ltd (Head Office)

1 De Havilland Drive, Liverpool
L24 8RN, United Kingdom
+44 151 427 8954
hello@joloda.com

Joloda BV (European Office)

De Hulst 13, 5807 EW, Oostrum
Venray, The Netherlands
+31 478 501 059
sales@joloda.nl

Joloda Japan K.K. (Japanese Office)

606 Eiwa Oike Building, 436 Sasaya-cho,
Nakagyo-ku Kyoto 604-8187, Japan
+81 0050 6875 6422
japan@joloda.com

Joloda Loading Automation (USA Office)

PO Box 4820, Wilmington
North Carolina, 28406, USA
+01 910 791 2125
brett.murrill@loading-automation.com

Joloda Hydraroll SAS (French Office)

1 Cour Du Harve, CS50101
75008 Paris, France
+33 7 81 41 99 00
france@joloda.com

Joloda Brasil (South American Office)

Av. Nicolau Ferriera de Souza, 1299 - Terra
Baixa, SP Brazil, CEP 18147-000
+55 11 4136 3046
jorge@joloda.com.br