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Press Release

Together against Corona

Packaging Valley companies support the fight against COVID-19

The challenges are enormous. It is a race against time. But Packaging Valley would not be Packaging Valley if its member companies did not pull out all the stops.

Seven trucks make their way to the airport in August 2020. 38,000 kg packed into 15 crates. And that is only the second part of a shipment to the USA. The first part is already on the high seas. One of the largest cargo planes in the world is chartered so that the filling line can be deployed as quickly as possible. All the stops are being pulled out. Characteristic of the companies in Packaging Valley.

True to the motto #GemeinsamMehrErreichen (Achieve more together), new machines are developed in record time, existing lines are adapted to the new requirements, delivered and put into operation with all the quality features. Suppliers, service providers and packaging machine manufacturers pull together. They develop and produce reliable, high-performance components and equipment for auxiliary products, diagnostic test kits and vaccines. And they do so within the shortest possible time. Whereas a project might take several months, the target is now set at just a few weeks. Production is running at full speed. Extra shifts are worked. Existing projects are rescheduled in consultation with the customer to shift capacities. New work routes are found to maintain production and supply chains while still guaranteeing maximum protection for the workforce. The complex requirements and time pressures make many methods a first. It's not easy in these times. But the high level of commitment of our employees, their willingness and flexibility make it possible.

We all know that the situation is exceptional. Fortunately, the companies from the packaging cluster in southern Germany had already set the course before the pandemic began. Many things are done digitally, such as commissioning or maintenance of the equipment at the customer's site. Some things, on the other hand, can be performed physically with worldwide networks. Although installation and service trips can be reduced, they are not always completely replaceable. After all, it is a matter of getting important equipment up and running as quickly as possible to expand the capacities of vaccine manufacturers even when travel restrictions and quarantine regulations make "being on site" a problem.

Virtual startups have been practiced for some time, but this time it's huge facilities and large teams that need to be trained and deployed quickly. Production must run reliably and almost continuously.

Who develops and delivers solutions?

A sample of Packaging Valley's Corona project portfolio:

Technologies from Syntegon Technology are used in the production of vaccines. This includes equipment for manufacturing vaccine substances and filling them into vials, as well as inspection machines for quality control. Thanks to the former Bosch packaging division's experience with biotechnological drugs, the technologies are also suitable for the new and highly sensitive mRNA vaccines. In addition, the company ramped up pharmaceutical services right at the start of the pandemic to accommodate the immense need for rapid maintenance and machine rebuilds.

Fast and safe filling of the sensitive substances is also guaranteed by Rommelag's coolBFS technology. The blow-fill-seal process is considered by experts to be one of the safest aseptic filling methods available.

Rommelag is the only company in the world to have a BFS pharmaceutical production facility at its Swiss contract filling plant not far from Lucerne that is certified to Biosafety Level 2 (BSL-2) requirements.

The packaging of the small vials in cartons is handled by the systems from Harro Höfliger. Feeding, filling, sealing, labeling, quality control - all automatically. Here, too, fully automatic packaging lines are provided in multi-shift operation within a very short time. Markus Höfliger, Chairman of the Supervisory Board, emphasizes the importance of a network: "Without partner companies and a functioning supply chain, such a mammoth task cannot be solved in such a short window of time." In addition, process technology from the company is used in the production of tests for the detection of coronavirus. Harro Höfliger also receives automation support from Heitec.

High performance and fast delivery of sensitive products make precise robot technology irreplaceable. Here in particular, undamaged storage and transport is more important than ever. PCA Roboter- und Verpackungstechnik GmbH delivers systems for the safe packaging and palletizing of so-called absorbers in a rush. They are used primarily in operating rooms to keep the air clean.

In addition to filling and closing systems for vaccines and therapeutic drugs, Optima also supplies systems to produce masks and filters. Since the beginning of the pandemic, existing plants have been adapted as quickly as possible for vaccine filling and new plants have been built with the utmost dedication of the employees. Optima is thus making a decisive contribution to coping with the COVID-19 pandemic. The company SMC Germany has also mobilized all its capacities at short notice to assist in the supply of pneumatic and electrical components for the production of the mask machines. With virtual machine acceptance tests and numerous digital services, Optima also ensures that equipment is delivered on time and that customers receive the best possible support.

Schmersal GmbH has developed an entirely new respiratory protection mask. The company specializes in machine and personal protection. The mask with replaceable filter offers the best protection against aerosols even under production conditions. With a special access control system that regulates the number of visitors, Schmersal provides the answer to policy measures.

Omron has made disinfection and personnel protection its business. Together with partner companies, self-propelled UV disinfection robots have been launched. The robotics expert is also helping to develop special automatic machines that speed up the production of diagnostic test kits.

For the rapid production of COVID-19 tests, the feeding technology experts Afag and Ho-Ma supply specially developed components. Afag GmbH provides new feeding stations with special drive technology in the shortest possible time. In cooperation with partner companies, Ho-Ma GmbH is supplying two semi-automatic robotic systems for the error-free production of cartridges used for Corona tests within just a few weeks. One of the systems will be used in Germany and one abroad.

Inquiries for the Wipotec load cells come from all over the world. This cannot be done without extra shifts. But in these times, this is a matter of course for everyone. In addition to checkweighers, Wipotec also supplies components for inspection and serialization solutions for reliable traceability of medications. Short delivery times are an outstanding feature: 32 checkweighers were delivered to China within six weeks.

Alfred-Giesser Messerfabrik GmbH from Winnenden shows that it is also possible to make a contribution in a different way. Without further ado, the knife manufacturer makes its ultra-low freezer available to the local vaccination center. The company also supplies knives to syringe manufacturers. This currently accounts for almost 50 percent more sales. But that also means 50 percent more output.

These are by no means all the projects from Packaging Valley that have sprung up overnight in the fight against the virus. Specialists for the packaging of sensitive products, for turnkey lines, digitization tools, automation components and engineering projects - they are currently in demand more than ever. And once again you can see how good it is to have a network to rely on in dire times. After all, many things are best mastered together.

#ThankYou

About Packaging Valley Germany e. V.

Packaging Valley Germany e. V. is the world's most innovative cluster in the packaging industry. It is the result of a merger of Packaging Valley Germany and Packaging Excellence Region Stuttgart. It networks around 80 companies with a total of more than 20,000 employees. These include manufacturers of packaging systems and packaging machines, suppliers of software and automation solutions, manufacturers of components, suppliers of services for the packaging industry and public institutions.

The companies in Packaging Valley are always one step ahead of the future and offer the market the best technologies in the field of packaging machines. With an export share of over 80%, the technological diversity from Packaging Valley is represented all over the world. International market leaders from the food, beverage, confectionery, pharmaceutical and cosmetics industries are among the customers.

Packaging Valley Germany e. V. is based in Waiblingen, with an additional office in Schwäbisch Hall. The majority of its members are located in the southwest, with a focus on the Stuttgart and Hohenlohe regions.