

■ Automacad Inc., Candiac, Québec, J5R 6X1 Canada

Reducing product manipulation on retaining walls and rock face products

In today's spirited marketplace, the fabrication of concrete products is amongst the most competitive. Landscapers, architects and the ever discerning home owners will forever be looking for new shapes and finishes. Thus every important concrete producer attempts to have creativity as well as ingenuity in order to constantly develop quality value-added product that will please an increasingly demanding clientele.

The creation of a variety of new products of different shapes, colors and textures often requires specialized equipment and extra production steps frequently accompanied by its share of material handling without any added value. As is the case

with rock faced and tumbled products, the myriad of machinery just to 'get the job done' can be costly and often difficult to justify. To remain at the forefront, producers must be creative in their approach to automation.

Recognizing that each and every stage of production generates extra costs, Techo-Bloc, a leading North American manufacturer of landscape and masonry paving stones, is working with Automacad with the intent of finding solutions to reduce product manipulation and to find innovative and cost effective ways of improving cycle time.

Automacad was given a mandate by Techo-Bloc to help Techo-Bloc overcome the problem of having to split retaining walls, restack them and re-handle the walls a second time for the aging process. The mandate was to find a way of splitting the retaining walls on the production board so down line the cubing clamp could pick up the layer of retaining wall and feed it directly to the Hess Tumblemaster TP8 for the aging process. A revolutionary achievement would consequently ensue in reducing costs for the manufacturer while avoiding the non-value-added stages of production. If this could be

accomplished, this would be a first world-wide attainment.

Two years after this project began Techo-Bloc installed the first Split-Impact in its Pennsylvania plant and a system of impacting chisels was implemented. The results were greater than what had been anticipated. A full layer of retaining walls that required 6 separates splits was now achieved simultaneously in 4 seconds, resulting in no interruption to the dry line or to the Hess Tumblemaster TP8 aging machine.

Techo-Bloc is now implementing the next generation Split-Impact which will require 15 splits per layer to achieve a double-sided retaining wall. After splitting the retaining walls the waste pieces are discarded automatically by a discarding device. The walls will then be clamped and fed to the Hess Tumblemaster TP8 for the aging process. "This Split-Impact will eliminate double-handling our retaining walls and will avoid any delay in the production process, resulting in an important decrease in costs of future product developments," states Charles Ciccarello, President of Techo-Bloc.

Fully integrated industrial solution

There are many approaches to a more effective production; many will automate their production line to a maximum while others will acquire more performing pieces of equipment. But it is not merely a question of lining up a string of machines that will ensure better productivity. These strategies can often turn out to be disappointing and sometimes reveal themselves to have little effect on the bottom line.

All block equipment sold on the market today has their unique characteristics which will generally confer exceptional



Techo-Bloc Corp. at Pen Argyl PA where the 2 Split-Impact are installed.



Staying in-line and on board requires no additional manipulation thus enabling smooth and uninterrupted production flow.



Split-Impact with 25 heads to fulfill the production needs of Techo-Bloc.

cycle time execution. But though as fast as some may be, replacing Machine A with Machine B will only accelerate one step in the process and your production line will always factor in the same material handling without any value added. The ultimate in a piece of equipment is no longer in its exceptional capacities nor by its local cycle time but in its global integrative capacity and overall simplicity of configuration to a production cycle, that is to say, outstanding flexibility necessary to today's production.

According to Louis Hebert, CEO of Automacad: "The key factor to a successful machine design not only resides in improving the competition's shortcomings and flaws but rather in the development of integrated industrial solutions and concepts that analyze and understand the needs and requirements of manufacturers in the concrete industry".

All producers, as is the case with Techo-Bloc, can further reduce their operating costs. The solution lies in creating and integrating machinery that eliminates non-value-added production steps. This reduction in the complexity results in a streamlining of the overall cycle time, thus radically reducing costs.

With their two new Split-Impact machines, Techo-Bloc is now in a position to fabricate a broader range of split products of different styles and at shorter notice and with little effect on the production line's cycle time.

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