5 QUESTIONS FOR NATALIE WITTLINGER

Natalie Wittlinger is Project and Sales Manager in the Packaging Technologies division. In this interview, she answers questions about current developments.

1

Everyone's talking about sustainability – how is this reflected in packaging?

One important aspect are the inserts: Products like pens, syringes and auto-injectors are secured inside the cartons by placing them in such an inlay. As they are often made of plastic, there's a trend to use cardboard instead. Yet they aren't suitable for every product. Both types are still used in our projects depending on the requirements, especially as developments are heading towards "green" plastics – we remain flexible here. But sustainability also means minimizing the space requirements and energy costs of production lines. We're well positioned here with our side-loading cartoners. As the name says, the products are inserted into the carton horizontally. Cartons that the user opens from the top can also be processed with our side-loading/top-opening concept.

2

The new version of MKT is such a side-loader. What sets it apart from the previous one?

Firstly, we managed to increase the output of this intermittent cartoning machine up to 150 cartons per minute. Nevertheless, it still remains very space-saving. Another important aspect was to achieve the high output without compromising product protection. For this reason, decentralized servo-drives control the individual stations, allowing the machine to run very smoothly even at high speeds. Last but not least, it is extremely flexible due to the easy format changeover and multiple closure solutions in one machine.

3

Flexibility – what are the trends in the packaging industry?

There is a clear trend toward product diversity. This means that a line should be able to package very diverse products, also in different quantities. Taken to an extreme, this even means changing to batch size 1, i.e. every single product has its individual packaging. This development shows why easy format changeover is so important, as it prevents prolonged downtimes when switching between different products.

But flexibility is also important to us in another sense: Harro Höfliger's packaging machines are never off the shelf, but are always individually adapted. For instance, in a recent project, we completely customized the machine. It packages beyond the conventional format range and products can be fed to the line either standing upright or turned by 90 degrees. Its shape is also unusual: Space was limited at the production site, so the line with its packaging machine, MQS quality module, through to the palletizer, is configured accordingly. For larger lines like this, we also excel with our ability to take care of the entire system integration.

4

What does system integration mean?

We procure all machines, including those from sub-suppliers, and combine them on-site at our facility. Rather than having to communicate with different companies, the customer then has a single contact who takes care of all topics. This way, all line qualification and validation activities can take place at the same location. With the line completely built and tested at Harro, the risk of interface related issues is reduced, so the line can go into production more quickly once it is installed. This approach is true to our credo as a turnkey supplier providing everything from a single source. Our processes are not only implemented during packaging, but often much earlier.

5

Can you give an example to illustrate this?

There are for instance medical devices such as auto-injectors and pens. Although we have separate, specialized departments for assembly and packaging technologies, we really benefit from each other. The assembly division, for instance, has in-depth knowledge of the device composition, which of course affects the packaging process. On the other hand, the packaging specialists can for instance develop an optimal transfer solution to the packaging machine. Thanks to the different departments, we illuminate tricky processes such as labeling from more than one perspective and then develop perfect solutions together.