

# Unitrunk

## Automation futureproofs business at Unitrunk



“Our growth over the past decade has been driven through production efficiency on the shop floor, as well as manufacturing automation, without any increase in additional labour”

A leading UK specialist in the design and manufacture of cable management solutions has invested in shop-floor automation as it looks to capture further market share and spur even more growth. Unitrunk, which is based in Lisburn, Northern Ireland, says recent investments in automated AMADA technology are saving time and introducing greater levels of flexibility at this progressive and ambitious engineering business.

With over 50 years' experience, Unitrunk has a long and successful track record of supplying the construction and electrical sectors with a wide range of cable management solutions. As a result, the 105-employee business is now a multi-million concern with an additional six sales and distribution depots across the UK (Livingston, Durham, Manchester, Wolverhampton, Bristol and Harlow), as well as another in Dublin and a sister company (Vantrunk) in Runcorn.

A recent case in point is the installation of the **AMADA CS** stockyard automation system, linked to two AMADA EM series punch presses (one existing and one new) that are fed by LIII loaders and unloaded by **TK-3015R** part picker/removal units.

“Previously we had stand-alone punch presses with **AMADA MP** load/unload systems, but with the **CS** stockyard we now have no waiting for material to arrive or leave,” says Mr Cartmill. “In addition, we can process a much wider range of material without any manual intervention whatsoever.”

The system offers full lights-out production, easy stock management, part picking/stacking and, with the addition of the new **AMADA EM-3612ZR T** punch press, full automated tool selection in approximately 10 seconds (in hidden time while the sheet is running), providing high levels of flexibility. Unitrunk completed a thorough review process, assessing a number of stockyard automation systems before opting for the AMADA CS from a final shortlist of two. The company is currently in the process of writing upwards of

15,000 programs for the new system, but is hopeful this task will be complete within 12 months.

Graham Milligan, Operations Director at Unitrunk, says: “Our **MRP/ERP system** determines batch sizes based on min/max stock levels, while also considering any orders on the system. We make for stock and we make to order. For the latter, we can nest on the fly to meet short lead-times.”

Mr Cartmill adds: “We only run a single shift so we need to maximise our lights-out production capabilities. With the previous MP loaders we could only unload to 3 tonnes at a time, but with the **CS** we can run continuously. Moreover, we could only load two gauge sizes with the MP loaders, whereas now we can run any gauge size and any material type. Changeovers are automatic and take just 2-3 minutes, in comparison with having a manual process previously that relied on a forklift truck and driver.”

Describing the **CS system** as very easy to use, Mr Cartmill says that the company typically processes 0.9 and 1.2mm thick galvanised steel sheet, but sometimes up to 3.0mm for specials. The company also processes stainless steel and black steel (un-galvanised) product ranges.

Unitrunk, which is the largest AMADA user in the whole of Ireland, is also enjoying a number of benefits with the part-picker units. The ability to automatically stack completed parts from the punch presses contrasts greatly to the previous requirement for manual labour to shake parts from the skeleton sheet.

The ongoing investment in automation at Unitrunk has led to a highly responsive and flexible business. Today the company enjoys high levels of success in providing products that include standard trunking, cable trays, channels, supports, cable baskets, floor trunking and a wide range of accessories. Unitrunk has also developed a series of rapid installation systems, such as the patented UNIKLIP® for cable trays that is three times faster than standard cable tray systems, and the patented EasyConnect cable



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basket system that provides users with choice, speed and versatility. Such is the breadth and quality of the range that Unitrunk is repeatedly selected for prestigious construction projects. Recent examples include:

The Obel tower, the tallest skyscraper in Northern Ireland; Southern General Hospital (Scotland); the first ever ‘Eco’ superstore for Tesco in Northern Ireland; the Titanic Signature building in Belfast and Newcastle United Football Club.



*“We never sell on price, we sell on factors such as quality and serviceability – making products that are easier or quicker to install so that users can save time and money on site,”* says Mr Milligan.



*“Investment in the quick-turnaround automated punching cell is a way of future-proofing our business and helping sales to grow even further. Moving forward we will probably look at greater integration with our folding machines. For us, it’s all about reducing dead time between processes.”*



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Of course, all the benefits of automation are achieved without any compromise in quality. Unitrunk products meet and surpass all relevant standards through in-house manufacturing to ISO 9001:2015 and CE accreditation. The company has also successfully achieved the ISO 14001:2015 environmental accreditation, as well as the OHSAS 18001 health and safety accreditation. These three elements make up Unitrunk's business management system, which is used as a vehicle to drive continuous improvement and integrate consistent best practices throughout the group.

**Service, quality, innovation and a desire to deliver excellent cable management solutions is at the heart of Unitrunk. The company has five decades of business experience and industry expertise, and has no intention of standing still.**

#### AMADA machines:

- CSII 300-12 compact store (2018)
- EM-3612ZR T punch press (2018)
- EMZ-3610NT punch press (2005)
- Two LIII 300 loading systems (2018)
- Two TK-3015R part-picker/removal units (2018)
- HG-1003ATC press brake (2017)
- HFE-1003M2, 4 axis press brake (2014)
- HFP-5020S press brake (2008)
- VIPROS 358K punch press (2000)
- MP 300 Sheet load/unload (2000)