

Late Stage Customization: Ferring opts for flexibility

The term Late Stage Customization refers to the fast, short-term production and supply of pharmaceutical products for specific markets. Products are no longer completed and stocked ready for delivery on demand, but produced in advance in large quantities and first customized for the respective market in the required quantity when ordered. However, this process has to be quick. For this reason, the Ferring Pharmaceuticals Swiss production site in Saint-Prex near Lausanne recently took delivery of a highly flexible system comprising a printer, cartoner and stretch-banding machine. The order involved a German-Swiss cooperation between Uhlmann and Hapa for a line for the processing of small batches. The machinery was delivered, validated and put into operation by Uhlmann in rapid time.

These days, pharmaceutical products used throughout the world usually have to be print marked in several languages; in some cases in even up to 80 languages. As a result, packaging lines designed for high performance only then process a

fraction of their maximum output in an operating cycle so the efficiency of the machine falls way below the targeted rate. Furthermore, batches produced in advance in certain languages for specific countries are not necessarily ordered

in the same quantity. This results in additional costs for surplus production and stockkeeping or for subsequent supply. Consequently, last fall Ferring Pharmaceuticals opted for an alternative solution: the efficient, advanced production



The newly installed packaging line allows Ferring Pharmaceuticals maximum flexibility in the country-specific processing of medicines.



Caroline Grosso, leader of the project at Ferring Pharmaceuticals, and her colleagues Antonio Cardoso and Julien Grand, in charge of operating the line, are pleased with the operation, performance and product quality of the new packaging line.

of blank blisters in large quantities and subsequent customization to order.

Utmost flexibility on a small footprint

Maximum flexibility and pharmaceutical reliability in the smallest of spaces were the criteria defined by Caroline Grosso, leader of the project team at Ferring, when selecting the line. These criteria were convincingly met by Uhlmann in cooperation with Hapa. At the head of the line is a Hapa 2-color printing system that is specifically designed to process small and medium-sized batches according to Late Stage Customization requirements. It ideally complements Uhlmann's line configuration. Two inspection systems are integrated to ensure the rejection of faulty blisters as well as to guarantee that the right product receives the right print marking.

Correctly printed blisters are transferred to the Cartoner C 130 and packaged in cartons. Just 3.10 m in length, the C 130 is Uhlmann's smallest intermittent motion cartoner of GMP-compliant pharmaceutical design. It packages a wide range of product shapes with consistent precision at an output of up to 150 cartons/minute. No tools are required for format changeovers

because the few plug-and-play format parts are quick and easy to replace. Access to stored format data through the TouchControl operating system minimizes changeover times to twenty minutes. Additional key features that influenced Ferring's decision in favor of the C 130 in Saint-Prex are the self-explanatory operating concept as well as optimum machine accessibility.

The Stretch-banding machine S 3015 also has an infeed capacity of 150 cartons/minute. Once the cartons have passed the checkweigher, they are wrapped in single-lane bundles. Format changeovers on the S 3015 are also done without tools and involve a maximum of four plug-in parts. The central, intuitive operating system administers up to 30,000 different sets of format data and thus guarantees utmost flexibility.

Precision job by crane

Flexibility was also called for when the line arrived at Ferring's premises in Saint-Prex in the Canton of Vaud. The configured line could not be installed in the production area on the second floor by entering the door. Fortunately, good weather allowed unpacking of the line on the company's forecourt. A crane hired by Ferring then lifted it up to the second floor and maneuvered it through a window: a precision job that was critically followed by technical experts from Uhlmann. The procedure went smoothly and the technicians were soon able to install and validate the line. Thanks to excellent support from the Ferring production team, the work was completed within a week.

“Three perfectly coordinated machines, their short-term configuration by Uhlmann, and complete validation within a week – thanks to excellent cooperation, Late Stage Customization is now a part of daily production at Ferring.

Caroline Grosso, project team leader at Ferring Pharmaceuticals



Tricky work with heavy lifting equipment: the cartoner and stretch-banding machine are brought into position, lifted over the front of the building and maneuvered into the production area. Technicians then completed installation.



Ferring Pharmaceuticals

Founded by Dr. Frederik Paulsen in Malmö in 1950, Ferring Pharmaceuticals was a pioneer in developing and selling pharmaceutical products based on natural, pituitary-produced peptides – tailored treatments that work on the body's own terms. Ferring operates worldwide, employing more than 3,500 staff and having offices in 45 countries and sales in more than 70. The company identifies, develops and markets innovative products in the areas of urology, gastroenterology & endocrinology and reproductive health. Production sites are located in Germany, Denmark, the Czech Republic, Israel, China, and at the company's headquarters in Switzerland, where urology and gastroenterology treatments are manufactured and all products are packaged. Ferring's R&D takes place in San Diego (USA), Copenhagen (Denmark) and Beér Tuvia (Israel).