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When to Automate

Motivo Engineering (<https://www.robotics.org/company-profile-detail.cfm/Integrator/Motivo-Engineering/company/1813>)

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CLIENT

One of the largest bagel bakeries in the US has grown from a single storefront location into a large wholesale bagel maker producing more than a million bagels each day across multiple production facilities. Motivo was asked to review the client's production operations and search for opportunities to improve efficiency and quality through the use of automation. The effort would result in a list of initial discoveries and cost estimation for the most promising solutions.

CHALLENGE

Automation in any food process poses challenges due to the inherent variability in each item. Additionally, the installation of any solution must have a minimal impact on existing production throughput. Heavily constrained floorplans and significant differences between client-run production facilities increase the challenge of finding a cost-effective solution.

MOTIVO'S SOLUTION

Motivo identified an estimated \$3M/year labor savings through fully automating eight separate production processes. Based on technical risk and labor savings of each process, three were prioritized and investigated for cost and feasibility. Motivo assembled a proposal to automate these processes but during our investigation found significant inefficiencies in the current production at one facility. After presenting the findings to the client they chose to make internal improvements before proceeding to full automation. Our research helped spark organizational restructuring and inspired a deep dive into current business cases for products that were pulling down the bottom line.

A different production facility of the client's was much more suited for automation. With a large, open floor plan and fixed machines for the entire production cycle that perform a single task, this facility was able to get the efficiency gains desired. With a change in scope for the project, investigations into opportunities for this facility revealed two major processes that would benefit from automation. These solutions were more elegant and nearly half the cost of automating the first facility. Motivo provided estimated costs, labor savings and ROI to the client.

OUTCOME

Based on Motivo's findings, the client realized the need to restructure their Corporate Strategy and CapEx Investment. Motivo was able to act as a change agent for a fifty-year-old business, setting in motion plans for a new kind of bagel bakery experience. By looking at the production as a holistic system including costs, sales figures, and yield, Motivo was able to identify less obvious issues that significantly affected the client's profitability. The client, now realizing the impact of these internal practices and processes, is addressing these findings while they continue to work with us on developing automation solutions for their facilities.

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