

[ CASE STUDY ]

Products: Ascom Wireless Andon solution

Customer: Getinge

Segment: Industry



## IMPROVED PRODUCTIVITY WITH ASCOM WIRELESS ANDON

Getinge Group is a leading global provider of products and systems that contribute to quality enhancement and cost efficiency within the healthcare and research sectors. The company provides solutions for infection control in health care, and contamination control in biotechnology.

“When we started the project we went out with inquiries to a number of suppliers. Pretty soon it became apparent that Ascom was the only vendor that could deliver the combined solution we were looking for!”

Getinge Sterilization, GS, is a manufacturing unit of the Getinge Group. GS manufactures sterilization equipment for hospitals and pharmaceutical industries around the world.

To maintain its strong position and meet the market demands for lower prices, GS saw a need to make drastic changes in their final assembly line of standard machines. A project was started up with the aim of improving productivity. Fairly quickly it was concluded that a new manufacturing system for leaner production should be introduced, its goals being shorter lead times, reduced working hours and increased quality.

Early in the project, GS realized that they needed a system that measured production line pace as well as an alarm system for error notification - a so-called Andon system. They searched for a solution that combined these two functions within one single system. When it came to the Andon system, a requirement to reach production team leaders wherever they were located was identified – whether this was on the production floor, in the design office or in the store room. Given the short lead times they wanted to achieve, GS realized that there was a need for wireless communications.

**Carl Bjäreku** is project manager for the production line at Getinge Sterilization:

“When we started the project we went out with inquiries to a number of suppliers. Pretty soon it became apparent that Ascom was the only vendor that could deliver the combined solution we were looking for! We placed an order just before Christmas and after working closely together with Ascom the system was up and running in April the following year,” says Carl Bjäreku.

The visual part of the system comprises of two major screens on the assembly line. The screens show where production is in terms of pace, if there are any problems and the goal for the week.



Carl Bjärekull, Project Manager

“We have gone from a poor delivery performance to a delivery reliability of 95% in less than half a year. By working with pace times and continuous improvements, we have succeeded in reducing the number of man hours by about 20% in one year,”

GS uses the system for two types of communications. One is alarms; the operator presses an alarm button on their phone, the alarm is highlighted on the board, logged in the database and goes out to the team leader. The team leader acknowledges or forwards the alarm to the supervisor. When the problem is fixed it is once again acknowledged, either via wireless phone or PC.

The other type of information flowing through the system is data on when each work station is finished with their specific task. When tasks are complete, their pace is registered and acknowledged. When all tasks have been acknowledged it is time to switch over to the next pace and the next autoclave. All alarms and rate fluctuations are logged in a database.

The information from the database is used in Getinge’s continuous improvement efforts.

“Some time ago, we suspected that we had a lower productivity on Mondays. Thanks to the statistic reports it could be proved that this was the case. We discussed the problem with the operators to see if we could find a reason. It turned out that afternoon work fluctuated during the week, Monday until Thursday afternoon were devoted to preparations for the following day’s work while Friday afternoons were devoted to cleaning. With a new modified approach we could secure good productivity even on Mondays”, says Carl Bjärekull.

The fact that the screens provide the operators with information on where they are in terms of pace as well as providing information on where they are in relation to their weekly objectives contributes to a reduced stress levels among the workers.

The wireless system is also of great support when it comes to the introduction of new models in the production line.

One handset is dedicated to the person responsible for error handling during the introduction. The handset rotates between the workers at the design department. The new way of working has delivered simpler and more flexible error handling procedures with an average response time of 5 minutes. GS is now introducing new models in a much smoother way thanks to Ascom’s wireless system.

“Maintaining pace is everything when it comes to lean production. By doing so, it is now much easier to predict delivery times and to control and correct when a problem occurs.

“Before we introduced the Ascom Wireless Andon solution the average assembly time for our standard machines was about three weeks. After we introduced the pace line the time was reduced to three days”