

PRESS RELEASE

Clouver SmartKits for paperless data management

Vita Group goes from analog to digital: operational excellence and efficiency with the ProCom cloud solution for cutting technologies

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Moving away from paper-based docketts and towards digital solutions for production planning and process optimization: Clouver SmartKits by ProCom Automation now ensure that at the Vita Group site in Maastricht the production data of all cutting machines are digitally recorded and evaluated.

Paper docketts: plenty of work and time for little benefit

The Vita Group is one of Europe's leading suppliers when it comes to flexible polyurethane foam, latex, and flooring products. In Maastricht in the Netherlands, the company is one of only two in the world to manufacture Talalay latex. This special latex provides not only more breathability and elasticity but is also antibacterial. The production area used to foam the latex is highly digitalized. However, this is not the case for the area where the latex blocks are cut, glued, and packaged. Until recently, employees recorded production data manually on paper based docketts. These were then manually transferred to Excel spreadsheets. This took a lot of time, roughly 30 minutes per machine operator per shift, which was more than 1,000 working hours per year. In addition, the data in the Excel tables was analyzed inadequately. The findings were not very robust and left considerable room for interpretation. To achieve sustainable improvements in the production process, however, it is an important prerequisite to systematically record and analyze the production data.

Collecting data digitally: for quick access anywhere

The person responsible for process optimization in this Vita business area is Adam Gittins. "We can only make production processes better, more efficient and safer if we reliably measure and evaluate how good we are at cutting," says the Operational Excellence Manager. Maastricht's challenge: The contour cutting machines are equipped with a CNC control system made by ProCom with an integrated interface to Clouver, enabling the machines to send their production data directly to the Clouver

production monitoring platform. This is not the case with the two vertical and horizontal cutting machines which are 25 years old. What could be done to digitally record the data from all cutting machines? In search of a solution, Adam Gittins got in touch with ProCom Automation.

Small Clouver SmartKits, big impact for everyone

As experts in control and IoT solutions for the cutting industry, ProCom has the right solution at hand: SmartKits as a supplement to the Clouver IoT platform. At the heart lies the Clouver GateWay with smart software, which implements digital data acquisition via interfaces for current and voltage measurement with galvanically isolated sensors. With the "little black box", the connection to the Clouver Cloud can be established easily and quickly.

In spring 2021, the SmartKits in Clouver's basic version were installed at the Vita site in Maastricht. The operating states of the cutting machines are now read out, evaluated, and displayed graphically. Clouver enables access to the digital image of the production at any time for the production supervisors and the management at Vita's headquarters in Manchester, UK.

Easily IoT-ready instead of a costly retrofit

Without the Clouver SmartKits, digital data acquisition would not be an option for the two old machines in Maastricht. Preparing them for IoT would have required a major retrofit with manual intervention in the hardware and a high financial investment. The SmartKits, in conjunction with the cloud solution, are an easy-to-install and cost-effective way to integrate sensor technology even in old cutting machines and to digitally map production. In addition, there is no need to replace any hardware. This not only minimizes investment costs, but also avoids the risk of unstable production and prolonged machine downtime.

If a machine switches to standby or off mode, the touch display (which can be configured individually) asks for the reason for the standstill. The machine operator only needs to select on one of the listed reasons. "Child's play and user-friendly!" says Adam Gittins. "All Vita Group employees benefit immensely from this. For the machine operators, this provides more freedom and additional time that they can use to focus on other tasks that optimize production."

Following the digital path

„This is our first step towards digitalization. But there is still a lot to do, in Maastricht and in other Vita plants," says Operational Excellence Manager Gittins. In addition to a Vita plant in France, where Clouver was installed via OPC-UA on one brand-new and three older cutting machines, and the site in Maastricht, Gittins is considering the mattress factories in Poland next. The mattress products manufactured there are so similar that it is very easy to compare the productivity of the three sites. The teams stand to benefit from shared learning and regular exchanges, thanks to information from Clouver. Gittins: "If everything works out as expected, we'll see a lot of potential for Clouver and the SmartKits in a number of other Vita plants, especially in plants where mattresses are produced." At any rate, the initial results are encouraging.

About ProCom Automation | <https://procom-automation.de/en>



ProCom Automation is a specialist for automation solutions in the cutting and separating industry. For more than 35 years, the experts at ProCom have been developing high-tech control solutions featuring CNC and CAM software as well as high-quality hardware adapted to the drive technology of renowned manufacturers.

Machine builders all over the world benefit from the cutting-edge automation solutions for a wide range of cutting processes such as knife, laser, waterjet, plasma, and foam contour cutting. With product development focused on market and customer needs, ProCom Automation delivers unique features with significant added value to provide customers with a key competitive advantage for their success.

Clouver, the IoT production monitoring platform, connects heterogeneous machine parks and brings transparency to production processes. With the targeted data evaluation of Clouver, unused potentials become visible, and productivity is optimized sustainably.

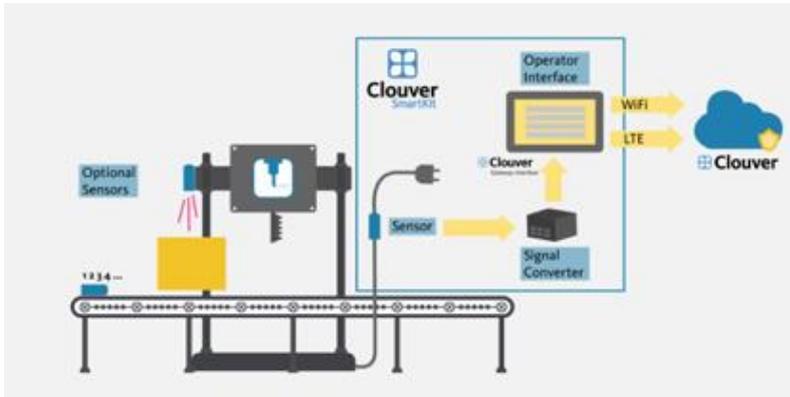
The company with its headquarters in Aachen is well established in the European and Chinese markets and continuously invests in the ongoing development and expansion of its product portfolio as well as in future-oriented technologies for maximum efficiency and flexibility.

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Illustrations:



Clouver SmartKit – the architecture



Real-time overview of the running production in Clouver



Thanks to Clouver, logistics for the production of many different products becomes easier and more efficient.