



Case Study

PEACOCK ENGINEERING REACHES ACCURACY GOALS VIA CHECKWEIGHERS FROM LOMA SYSTEMS

Accuracy is something that is expected by food companies who rely on contract packagers to help them bring their products to market. “We are expected to produce the correct quantity every time. It’s mandatory,” says Tom McCaffer, vice president of operations, Peacock Engineering.

The challenge is meeting those customer expectations while still keeping a lid on escalating costs. In a business where slim margins are the norm, out of line labour costs and expensive capital expenditures can make or break an operation.

Peacock Engineering has been in existence since 1942, but didn’t get into the food contract packaging game until the 1980s. Today it contract packages for many heavyweight companies including Kraft, Quaker Oats and Land ‘O Lakes.

To help evolve the company into the premier contract packager it is today, Peacock knew it had to tackle accuracy issues head on. The process began several years ago when Peacock started renting checkweighers from a used equipment dealer.

Although the rental equipment enabled the company to achieve a measure of accuracy, there were several hurdles to overcome. “We were spending several thousand dollars per year on the rental leases for used equipment. The machines were not as flexible or reliable as we would have liked, but purchasing all new units at the time would have been cost prohibitive,” McCaffer explains. The company worked around the rental equipment’s limitations until it found a better solution.



“We went to Pack Expo a few years back and stopped by the Loma Systems booth. We already had a couple of the company’s metal detectors in our plant, but we were interested in finding out what checkweighing options they could offer us,” McCaffer explains. That’s how Peacock first learned about Loma’s AS 1200C checkweighers, which have been designed to cost-effectively address weight-control applications.

The AS 1200C is an end-of-the-line “policeman” and is ideally suited for companies who couldn’t previously economically justify the addition of a checkweigher.

“Initially, we brought in one machine just to test it in our plant. Everybody liked it. Unlike our leased checkweighers, the AS 1200C was easy to use and program. Quality loved it because

Loma Case Study

they could lock the parameters in from job to job. And they were local, so parts and service were easy to get,” says McCaffer.

The unit offers production line speeds of up to 260 feet per minute. The AS 1200C target weight range is from 12-1200 grams with accuracy up to 0.5 grams. The unit’s memory holds up to 100 product specifications. RS output to a host computer facilitates data management and provides a communication link for printers and other devices.

The AS 1200C also offers a compact footprint—specific dimensions are dependent on application specific reject devices. The control panel has a vacuum fluorescent display, easy-to-use selection keys and multiple notification functions. Its low, entry-level price, combined with the features of systems twice as expensive, makes the AS 1200C ideal for applications which currently spot check their filled product using bench scales. The end result is a reduction of labour coupled with the ability to check every package unit for accuracy. “The other thing that made it attractive for us was that Loma was able to finance the units,” he notes.



Peacock currently has 12 Loma checkweighers distributed among three separate plants. In addition to the AS 1200C units, Peacock also has standard weight and lightweight versions of Loma’s AS checkweighing line to handle products with fill weight parameters that fall outside the AS 1200C’s range.

The emphasis on accuracy is further heightened by the movement toward club store counts. No longer is it acceptable to just have a checkweigher on your line, McCaffer says. It has to be a good one. “One that will insure you have all 40 baked goods in a package instead of just 39,” he says.

“With 30 to 35 lines flying per shift at 100 to 150 a minute, you are going to miss something if all you are doing is a visual check. So you have to put checkweighers on every line. Sometimes two on a line—one up upstream and one downstream.”

And what feedback has Peacock Engineering received since installing the Loma checkweighers?

“Our complaint level for missing items has gone way down. The companies for whom we contract package track complaint levels very carefully and they will let you know if you aren’t hitting your numbers,” McCaffer says. Increased accuracy means less rework. “If the product accuracy is off, you have to hand pull the package apart. That adds to our internal rework costs,” he says. “By meeting the food companies’ parameters on a consistent basis, we have the opportunity to gain additional business,” McCaffer says.

The AS 1200C can handle a broad variety of end-of-the-line food and non-food applications where fill accuracy is desired. The AS 1200C offers quick payback, modular design constructed of stainless steel with a one or two week delivery time.

Loma Case Study

Peacock Engineering has plants in Itasca and Geneva, IL and specialises in contract packaging and manufacturing of food, household, health and beauty products.
