



## CASE STUDY:

# Corrugated Converter “STICKS IT” to High Costs

*An automated gluing system reduces labor by 80% and cuts glue usage by two-thirds.*

**T**he Gibson Box Co. has produced corrugated pallets, build-ups and other packaging products since 1999, but company President David Gibson would turn back the clock four years if he could. That is when Gibson first considered purchasing its recently acquired Haeco engineered gluing system (EGS). The automated EGS has dramatically boosted the company's bottom line, cutting gluing operations labor by 80% and reducing glue usage by two-thirds.

“I kick myself for not doing this sooner,” says Gibson. “As the economy tightens, we have to keep a close eye on labor costs, and adhesive costs continue to rise as well. The EGS has helped us control both, and customers are commenting on the high quality of our work. This machine is a tremendous asset.”

### THE GLUING PROCESS

Gibson Box is a small-sheet plant in Ash Flat, Ark. The company produces custom packing materials for shipping computer components, medical supplies, car parts, bathroom cabinets and similar products. Customers send custom specifications for build-up blocks, laminate pads, honeycomb void fillers or other packing structures, and the plant converts corrugated and foam sheets using automated folders, cutters, and labelers. As recently as September 2012, the company was hand-gluing the structures and using roll coaters to apply hot melt or light glue.

“Gluing was the bottleneck, as well as the ‘big variable’ when it came to estimating lead times and project costs,” explains Gibson. “Our orders can be any size from a pallet to a truckload, and our profitability depends on how accurately we estimate labor and material usage. With the automated gluer, we have better control of our operations. We know exactly how long it takes to process a truckload and how much glue we need to complete the job. It’s something we, and our customers, can depend on.”

Gibson’s gluing system includes a manual stacker, bridge/manifold assembly and on-board water wash. The EGS is also available with auto-feed, auto-stack and compression units. The squaring and compression sections at Gibson are 35 sq ft each.

“The increased efficiency of our gluing operation has allowed us to not only keep up, but work ahead,” says Gibson. “We used to be able to process only what was released by the customer the previous day, and couldn’t build any inventory. Now, we can get the whole order done in a day and set it in the warehouse until the next truck arrives.”

### GLUE USAGE

Glue usage is another area where the EGS has impacted Gibson’s profitability. “The cost of glue is like the cost of gasoline: the price goes up, but rarely comes back down,”



*Above: All EGS units are custom configured to customer specs in regard to sheet width, number of control channels and stacker type (either automatic or manual).*

*Right: Gibson's EGS unit features six cold-glue valve assemblies and applicators.*



says Gibson. "When we were hand-gluing, we could usually complete one large order for every drum of glue we used. With the EGS, we're getting three orders per drum, so the machine is paying for itself in glue savings alone."

All EGS units are custom configured to customer specs in regard to sheet width, number of control channels and stacker type (either automatic or manual). Gibson's is configured to handle sheets up to 5 ft wide and includes six cold-glue valve assemblies and applicators, as well as a four-channel control with selector switches and a low-volume, low-pressure pump.

Multiple channels on the control and individual valve control provide the flexibility to apply hot-melt or liquid adhesive patterns in precise locations. The control configuration is customized depending on the desired glue patterns, and each control channel provides a different pattern based on the selected glue lengths and gaps.

"We're able to produce higher, more consistent quality because the setups and the glue patterns are the same every time," says Gibson. "We know

we're going to get a good product. Customers have been very impressed with the quality."

#### **OTHER BENEFITS**

The EGS has not only improved the quality of Gibson's packing products, it has also freed up capacity to allow the company to aggressively pursue new business. "The Haeco gluer is very easy to set up, and we're able to save our regular jobs in the control's memory, so it's easy to call them up, set up the job

and go," adds Gibson. "But the other advantage is that our job quotes are much more accurate in regard to cost and lead time."

Gibson's view of large orders has also changed. "Before the EGS, these big orders would take a toll on our manpower and our profitability," he says. "Now, I can't wait for the next truck to arrive." •

*For more information, call (513) 722-1030 or visit [www.haeco.us](http://www.haeco.us).*