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NEWS

Fleetwood-Fibre Streamlines 'Operational Efficiencies'

BY LEN PRAZYCH

As reported in the pages of Board Converting News in February of 2018, Golden West Packaging Group LLC acquired City of industry, California based Fleetwood-Fibre Packaging & Graphics, a Southern California-based independent providing high-impact packaging solutions through capabilities that include high-graphic corrugated packaging, POP displays,

ed States. And Fleetwood-Fibre also owned 20 percent of GoldenCorr LLC, a sheet feeder, ensuring it a constant supply of high quality containerboard. All of which made the California independent the perfect target for acquisition by Golden West, a holding company created in 2017 to assemble and grow a high-performing, mill-independent packaging business.



From left, Tom Pearce of Pearce Corrugated Consulting, Alex Gonzales of Fleetwood-Fibre and Mark McGinnis of Systec Conveyors

folding cartons, thermoformed plastic packaging and brown box corrugated solutions.”

Under the leadership of Chairman and CEO John Webb and President Brad Jordan, Fleetwood-Fibre, founded nearly 70 years ago, had grown into a successful and profitable enterprise that enjoyed year-over-year growth for the past several years. The company had a geographic advantage of being located at the center of a major ground transportation hub 35 miles from the Port of Los Angeles, with additional warehousing capabilities in Tijuana, Mexico. Fleetwood owned Impact MFG, its Dongguan, China based division that designs and manufactures packaging solutions not easily sourced in the Unit-

In their joint statement announcing the acquisition, Webb and Jordan said, “Joining Golden West enables us to reinforce the high-end customer service and support, as well as the high-impact design and printing solutions our customers have come to expect. In addition, it enables us to further enhance our manufacturing infrastructure and production efficiencies. By providing access to ample capital and Golden West’s expertise in building high-performance packaging companies, the future is bright for our customers and employees.”

John Webb retired, leaving Brad Jordan to lead Fleetwood-Fibre into the future. Golden West CEO Steve Strickland agreed that Fleetwood-Fibre was a perfect fit with

Golden West and was committed to working with Jordan and the entire Fleetwood team to ensure that their excellent customer service, support and high-impact design and printing solutions remain the best available. “We are highly energized to leverage our own experience in manufacturing excellence to help them transform into a high-performance manufacturer,” said Strickland.

Leveraging the capital assets and manufacturing expertise of Golden West, the newly-acquired Fleetwood-Fibre and its management team immediately embarked on an ambitious project designed to increase process flows and production efficiencies with new conveyerization, robotics, palletizers and

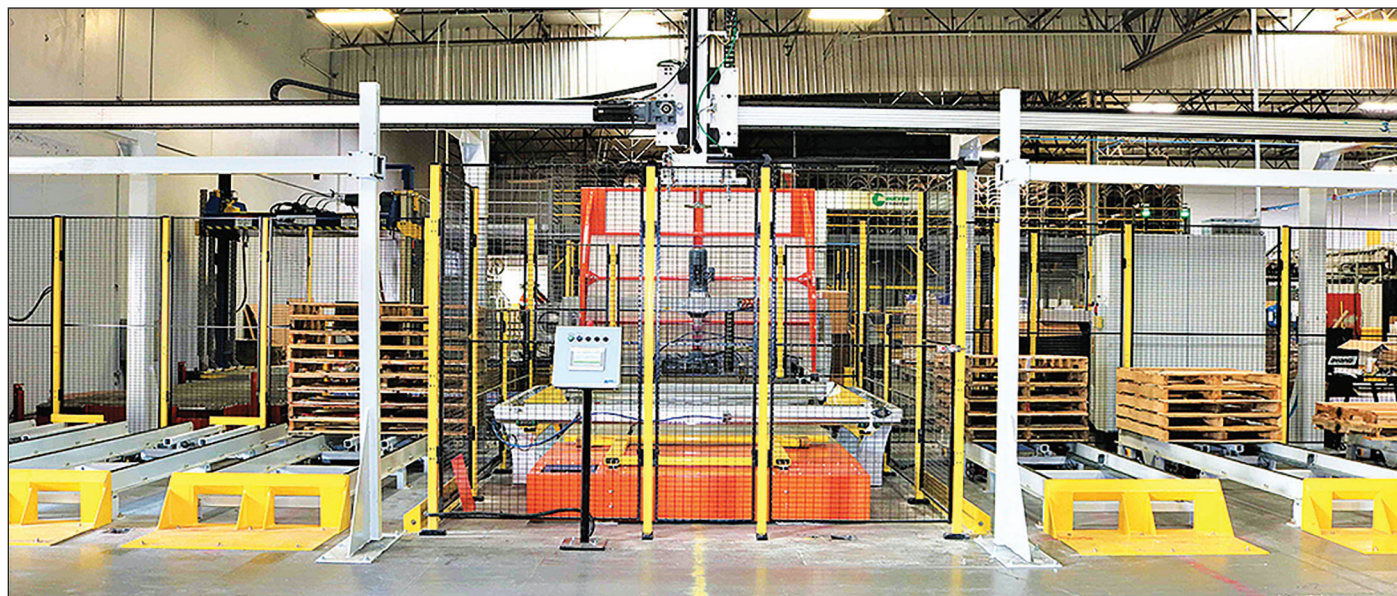
converting equipment in the 175,000-square-foot allocated to its corrugated operations. Under the same roof is an additional 75,000-square-foot for the company's folding carton operations.



REPLACING THE MAINLINE

Fleetwood-Fibre retained the services of Tom Pearce, President of Pearce Corrugated Consulting, to manage layout design and improvements to the facility, along with the sales and engineering team of Systec Conveyors, whose product – and those of other key suppliers – now has Fleetwood operating at a signifi-

cantly higher level of production since the undertaking began in March.



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“This was a fairly complex project in that we were replacing the entire mainline,” says Pearson. “Part of my role was to determine which machines needed to be removed and how the new machinery, robotics and conveyors would fit within the existing footprint of the facility, keeping in mind the specific goal of improving efficiencies and material flow.”

“We discovered we were not as efficient or effective as we could be,” adds Alex Gonzales, Corrugated Plant Manager at Fleetwood-Fibre. “Given our recent growth and with productivity only increasing, we

knew we needed to get the plant more aligned. Systec was a great partner that provided the solutions to accommodate our growth.”

Fleetwood-Fibre had partnered with Systec on previous projects in the past several years, most recently in 2015 when the Indianapolis, Indiana based supplier assisted with a takeoff conveyor on its rotary diecutter.

“The entire project required very special expertise and engineering,” says Gonzales of the current initiative. Drawing on Pearson’s decades of experience in knowing exactly where to position equipment, Fleetwood-Fibre’s facility was completely reshuffled. More remarkable is the fact that the nine-month transformation took place while the plant was operational and filling customer orders.

Pearson summarized the project as a process that involved removing the entire mainline of the plant, relocating the existing machinery and installing Alliance Fast-Pal robotics. An Avanti pallet inserter was added in the shipping department. In addition, an Automatän A+ Label/Laminator was added and an Apstar rotary diecutter with an Alliance prefeeder was installed on an existing machine. (A future upgrade involves putting a new automatic bundle breaking

and stacking system on the machine). An existing automatic Ducker stacking system was upgraded.

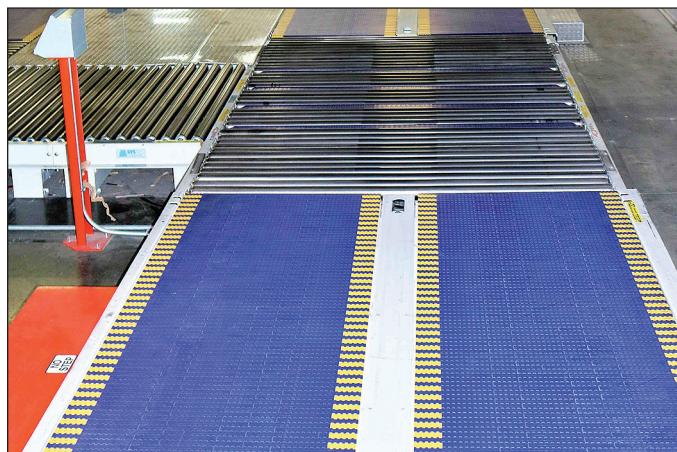
Systec installed approximately 600-feet of table stack and link belt conveyor; 36-feet of performance lineshaft conveyor; approximately 410-feet of roller conveyor; 14 belt transfers, seven chain transfers; four unit load downstackers; one load centering device; one VAPS 2-stage strapping system, an automatic system with bar code reading that will also identify the pallet needed for the palletizing system; four fork truck stations; an Avanti load palletizing device, the first installed in the U.S.; and an Avanti Fastpal, also the first installed in the U.S.

Systec Conveyors will also be adding safety cross-over sections throughout the mainline with pushbutton start/stop stations for pedestrian cross-over or emergency exits.

Ultimately, every piece of machinery in Fleetwood Fibre's plant was relocated, sold or replaced, except for its Goepfert rotary diecutter. Pearce points out that Haire Machinery was very helpful in the sale and relocation of equipment.

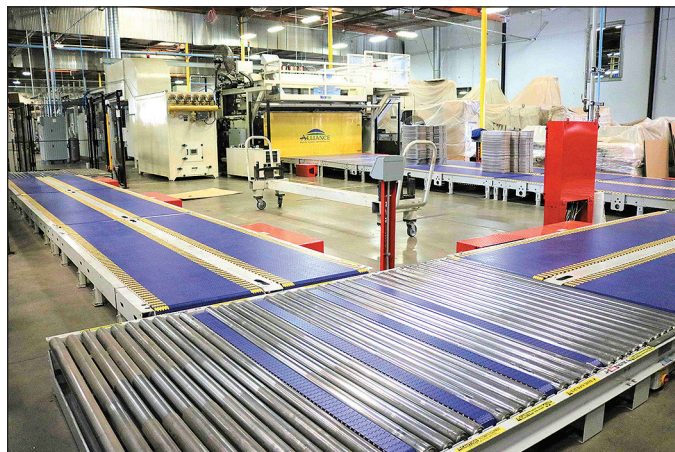


"The result has been better process flows throughout the plant, which allowed us to expand our customer base to accommodate more work through the facility," says Gonzales, who lauded Systec's sales and service team. "Systec not only helped layout the mainline conveyor, but with every other piece



of equipment we installed along the way," he says. "It was their service that stands out the most. They were here seven days a week and hit all target dates. Everything was done on time and programming was completed as stated."

With phase one of this multi-phase project complete, Fleetwood-Fibre has scheduled more work in 2019 with Inspire, the new company formed by the merger of Systec and Automatän (see the full story



on page 18) with the goal of having fully automated plant. "The year 2018 was one of the busiest years we've had in terms of growth and development," says Gonzales. "Not having to worry about our major conveyor project was priceless."

