

Vinyl Window Designs (VWD)

Vinyl Door and Window Manufacturer, Woodbridge, Ontario.

Equipment Purchased: i-3 line from GED

Integrated Solutions, www.gedusa.com

This is probably the most automated piece of equipment in the plant," says Mike Newman, general manager for VWD of the i-3 line that was purchased in the fall of 2008.

Newman also has strong loyalty to GED as he's worked with the company for a very long time and is extremely pleased with the level of service provided.

"Every time I look to improve, modify or expand I always consider a number of companies," he says. "There may be half a dozen companies I consider when looking at equipment. In the end, I might strongly consider two or three. More often or not, I find that GED brings the best overall package to the table. And not because they are the cheapest [but] because they deliver the best value."

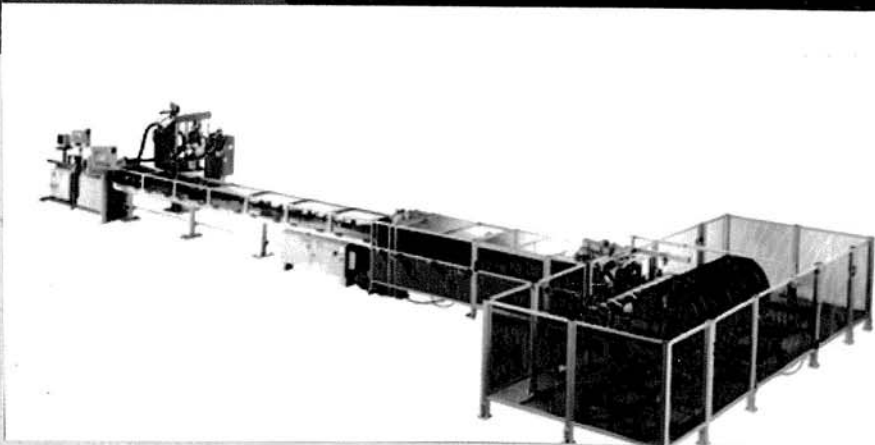
Price Tag

The i-3 line is part of a complete system that includes cutting tables and other machines. "It's very easy to put over a million dollars into a complete new glass line," he says.

He adds that at VWD price is not the deciding factor when it comes to equipment purchases.

"If you're looking at equipment purchases you have to look at the potential for downtime you might have. Any savings you thought you would gain through a purchase can evaporate very quickly sometimes by going with a cheaper piece of equipment," he says.

He adds that the company might pay more up front, but one of GED's claims to fame is the level of service and knowledge they have. "They work hard to keep us up and running," says Newman.



Main Reasons Behind the Purchase

Newman says one of the reasons the i-3 line was purchased was to give VWD customers the opportunity to offer something different.

"We're helping keep our customers out of the price war," he says. "If you show up to the door with the same product as everyone else, it doesn't help you. This machine produces a stainless steel spacer which is different. It's been around in commercial applications, but hasn't been affordable or practical in residential applications until recently. For us this was an investment in a unique high-end product."

Other benefits include:

- **Fully automated processing:** This is designed and built with lean manufacturing in mind says Newman. "It allows you to change from one product to another on the fly without having to incur the costs of downtime and changeovers."
- **Do more with same amount of people.** It's not that this equipment allows us to have fewer people, says Newman. It reduces the demand to have to struggle to find good employees. "In all the years we invested in automated equipment, we've never removed anyone. It allows us to

do more with same number of people. That works for everyone," he says.

- **Controls lead times and delivery.** Newman says controlling lead times and providing on-time delivery is a great benefit of this system. "It gives us a level of quality that only a machine with this level of automation can deliver," he says.

Advice for Manufacturers

While Newman is a strong proponent of automation he advises other companies to automate "when possible" or "when appropriate." He says there is a risk of over-automation.

"Certain pieces of automated equipment won't yield the same benefits if it's not fitted to your facility," says Newman. "So you can invest in highly automated equipment but because of your set-up or product line up you may not be ahead."

He also encourages companies to not wait for the economy to pick up to consider automated purchases.

"Regardless of when purchases are made the economic climate might be different in two to three years but those investment in efficiencies will still be there. That's what matters," adds Newman.

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