Saginaw Case Study with TAB Wrapper Tornado

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Saginaw Control & Engineering Automates Pallet Wrapping, Frees Forklifts and Speeds Production

With Culture of Automation, Saginaw Embraces TAB Wrapper Tornado Stretch Wrappers

When the company philosophy embraces automation as a critical path to success from as early as 1963, weathering economic ups and downs, labor market struggles, and cost volatility without major disruption becomes far more manageable. For Chris Sims, product distribution manager at Saginaw Control & Engineering, Saginaw, Michigan, the company's ingrained culture of automation has helped him not only weather the economic, labor, and cost challenges of the 21st century but also to speed production, improve worker safety, and reduce costs while doing so.

Saginaw Control & Engineering designs and manufactures standard and custom electrical enclosures in two facilities in Saginaw, Michigan using automated forming, fiber optic laser cutting and welding, robotic press brakes, and other state-of-the-art equipment. Powder coated carbon steel, galvanized steel, and stainless-steel housings are offered to suit any environment or application. The company stocks thousands of products at its 6 warehouses to provide fast deliveries to customers throughout the United States. After several decades of steady growth, Saginaw has grown sharply in recent years and now employs a staff of nearly 500 in engineering, production, logistics, customer service, and administrative positions.

Maintaining a professional workforce committed to supporting the company's high-quality reputation in a state suffering from declining population numbers, outmigration, and the loss of experienced labor to retirement demands constant attention, according

to Sims, who continues to investigate automating key tasks to address the issue. While many metals manufacturing companies invest handsomely in automating the production process, the new, faster machinery often creates new bottlenecks downstream, typically in packaging and shipping, where existing processes cannot keep pace. When Sims joined Saginaw in 2006, the company had just invested in seven turntable stretch wrapping machines and a robotic shrink wrapper to automate the pallet wrapping process. This initial step towards packaging automation replaced most of the pallet wrapping done by hand, along with its occasional cuts, scrapes, complaints, and overtime. Over the years, Sims noted the turntable wrappers would knock unstable loads off of the pallet during the wrapping process, and once in a while, the wrap would come loose during transit and cause freight damage. Wrapping several hundred pallet loads per day at an average value of over $1,000.00 per pallet load, the costs, headaches, and rework involved in damage claims doe to failed pallet wrapping always gnawed at Sims. “This was always very upsetting and one of my biggest reasons we started looking for a more modern, automated approach to pallet wrapping,” says Sims.

Sims read about a more modern, automated approach in *The Fabricator* called the TAB Wrapper Tornado orbital stretch wrapper and then saw it in action at the TAB Industries booth at FABTECH in Chicago, Illinois. “I immediately liked how the forklift driver could operate the TAB Wrapper without leaving the seat of the forklift,” says Sims, who sought to eliminate the injury risk involved with the turntable wrappers. Horizontal turntable wrappers require the driver to set the load on the platform, back away, exit the forklift, operate the machine, then return to the forklift to remove the pallet load. Though no serious injuries had occurred, the specter of slips, trips, and falls weighed on Sims. He bought the TAB Wrapper Tornado and had it up and running in the Saginaw EAST manufacturing facility in a few short months.

Patented Orbital Stretch Wrapper Made in USA

The TAB Wrapper Tornado line of orbital stretch wrap machines automatically wraps

plastic film 360 degrees around and under the pallet and load while it is raised on a forklift to create a stable, secure, unitized load that resists shifting and sliding in transit. Designed and manufactured by TAB Industries, LLC at its Reading, Pennsylvania facility, its patented technology tightly wraps a pallet load in 30 seconds or less. It allows companies like Saginaw to deliver their palletized electrical housings and other finished products, assemblies and mixed parts without needing boxes, crates, banding, or strapping. It also allows a single forklift driver to manage the entire pallet wrapping process without leaving the forklift or coming into contact with the wrapping machinery. This approach applies compression forces from all six sides of the pallet load to keep the unitized load securely in place. By contrast, horizontal turntable wrappers only wrap the load to itself, not to the pallet, leaving the top and bottom of the pallet load uncovered, which invites sliding in transit, in storage, and while moving on forklifts.

Sims purchased the Smart Controls model TAB Wrapper Tornado. To operate, the forklift driver raises the pallet load, drives it into the center of the wrapping ring, and presses “start” on the wireless remote control while sitting inside the cab. Then the orbital wrapper automatically encircles the pallet load in layers of plastic stretch film as the driver gradually moves forward or back until the wrapping process is finished. When complete, the driver presses “stop” on the remote control and the built-in automated cut and wrap device automatically cuts the end of the plastic and readies it for the next pallet load. The forklift driver may bring the wrapped pallet to the dock for delivery, to a storage rack, or to another location as needed. The orbital stretch wrapper's 100-inch wrapping ring accommodates nearly 75% of the company's electrical enclosures, this covers products up to 60” tall on 72x72 pallets.

Response in the plant was immediate. “Everyone loved it,” says Sims, “It wraps fast with consistently tight tension, it's quiet, and our drivers really appreciate being able to control the wrapping process without getting on and off the forklift.” Operator training took only 15 minutes. The productivity increase was also immediate. Automating the stretch wrapping process not only freed workers to address more productive tasks, but it also

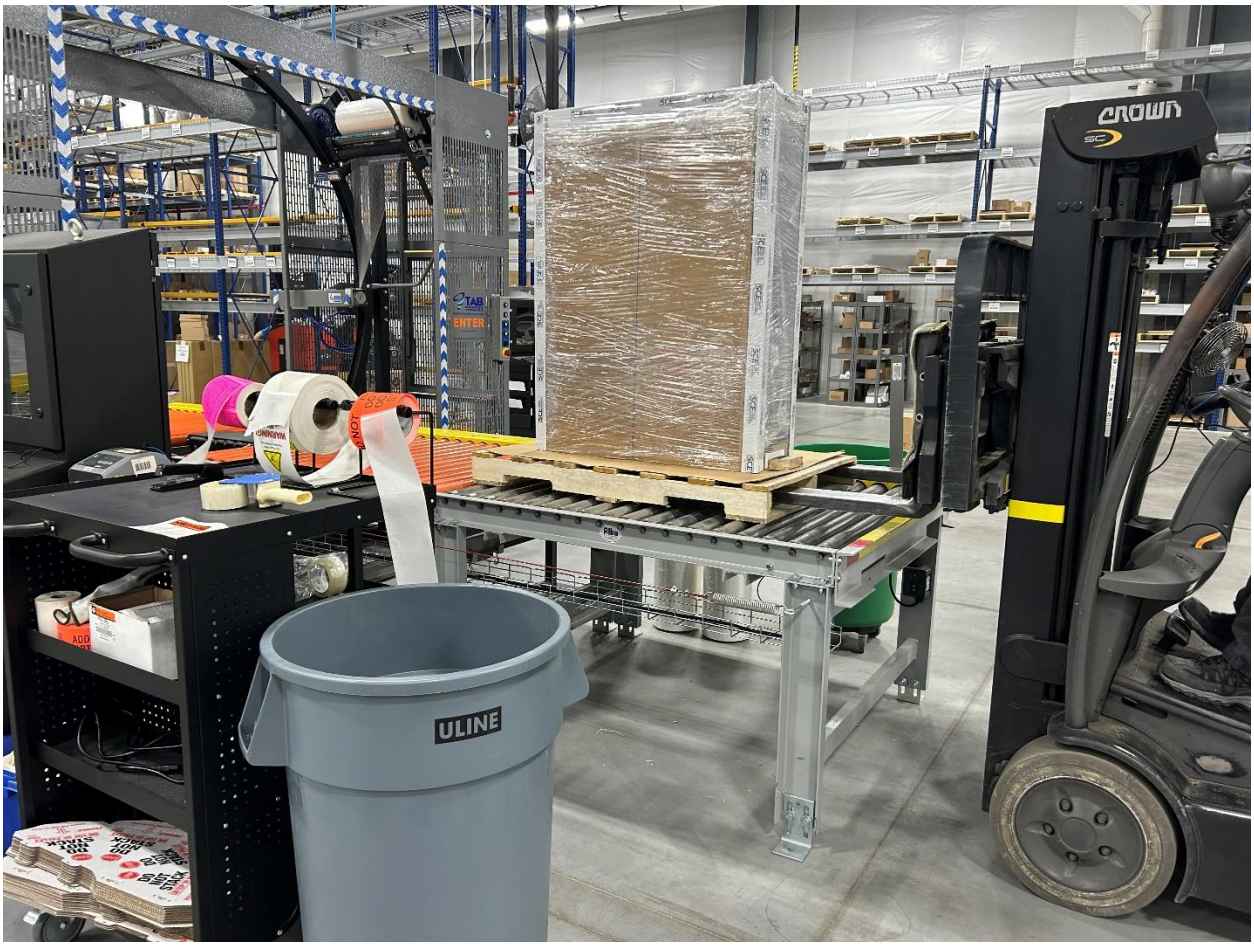
improved forklift utilization and eliminated concern for product damage during deliveries to the customer. “Then word got out and everyone in the other plants and warehouses wanted a TAB Wrapper Tornado,” says Sims. “We're already predisposed to support automation and the ROI was so fast and obvious on the first unit that getting more TAB Wrapper Tornados was a no-brainer.”

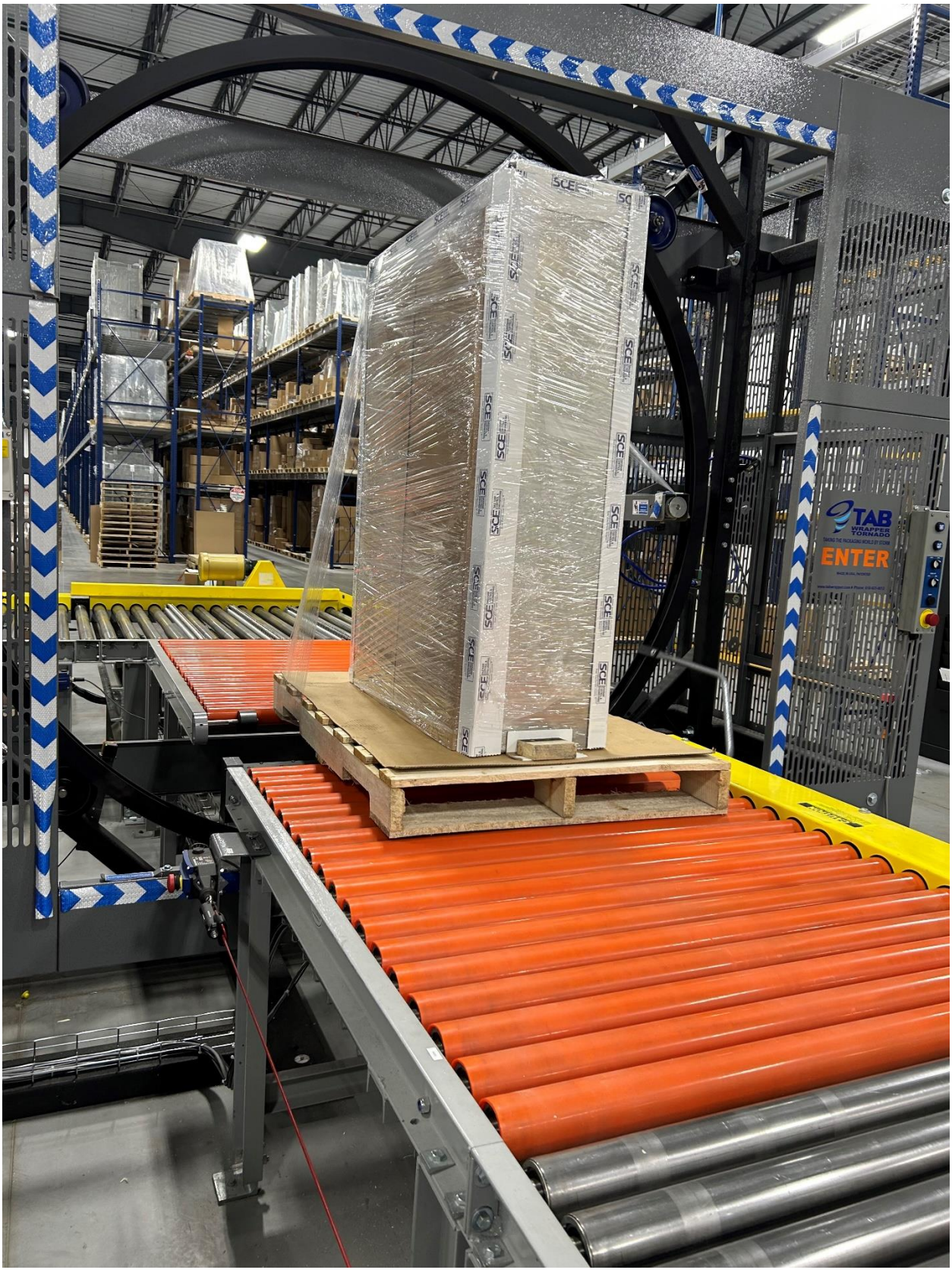
Sims purchased seven more of the 100-inch Smart Controls TAB Wrapper Tornado models over the next four years to modernize all of the company's distribution centers with the automated wrapping system. He also purchased three of the fully automated TAB Wrapper Tornado Perfect Storm systems for the Saginaw manufacturing facilities. These fully automated systems add an extra layer of efficiency and forklift utilization. The forklift driver places the pallet load on a roller conveyor then leaves to go about other tasks. The Perfect Storm automatically feeds the pallet load into the 100-inch wrapping ring, applies three layers of stretch wrap as programmed, cuts the stretch wrap, then discharges the wrapped pallet load down a second roller conveyor to an accumulation area. The forklift driver picks up the wrapped pallets at the driver's convenience. “The annual savings in labor costs and forklift utilization from the Perfect Storm systems alone probably tops $100,000.00 per year,” says Sims. “The TAB Wrapper Tornado has returned our investment in a much shorter period than other automated equipment. These systems allow us to focus our resources of both labor and equipment on manufacturing our products.”

Enjoying “very little downtime” and quick access to spare wear parts made and stocked in TAB's Reading, Pennsylvania headquarters, Sims has rebuilt the entire packaging and shipping operation around the efficiency and safety of TAB Wrapper Tornado orbital stretch wrappers. “They transformed a physically demanding job that no one really liked doing into a job that everyone looks forward to doing,” says Sims, who plans on investing in additional TAB Wrapper Tornado machines as the company grows and adds new facilities. And the lineup of horizontal turntable wrapping machines? Nearly all have been sold. Adds Sims, “Once you automate pallet wrapping with the TAB Wrapper Tornado and see the results in productivity, efficiency, and cost savings – all without hiring – there's just no going back.”

For more information on Saginaw Control & Engineering, call 989-799-6871 or see https://www.saginawcontrol.com/.

For more information on the TAB Wrapper Tornado, call Andy Brizek at TAB Industries, LLC, 610-921-0012 or see www.TABWRAPPER.com.

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