

Wintech Testimonial

Cabinet Upgrade

*An interview with Sian Colley
Rubber Products, UK*



QUALITY FOAM CONVERTERS

Wintech Console Upgrade Performs Faster with Fewer Errors

Sian Colley is the Director/owner of Rubber Products (Leeds) Ltd. In this interview, Sian describes her experience with an 18-year-old Wintech machine and the impact of the recent new console upgrade. Sian discusses support and delivery of the new console and offers advice for manufacturers deciding on a new purchase.

How do you describe your business?

We are foam converters. We buy blocks of foam, and we convert those for various industries. We make a diverse range of foam products from those foam blocks, ranging from medical mattresses to shapes for children's soft play. We also make pipeline pigs which are used for cleaning out oil and water pipes. RPL also supply foam parts for the furniture industry.

How big is your business?

We employ 24 people, and the business has been in operation since 1958. It's been in the family for about 57 years. They bought the company when it was under ten years old.

You've had some Wintech equipment for 18 years, and you've recently upgraded it with a new console. What has this equipment meant for your business?

Over the 18 years, it's made a big difference to the business because it's a reliable replicator. You can put a block on, programme it and then it just literally cuts the whole block, everything, the same. From that point of view, it's quick and uses less manpower to create multiple items. The other difference is that, because you can do it on a computer programme, by nesting the product, you get better utilisation out of your block, so you don't have a band knife operator cutting into a block incorrectly and creating more off-cuts. In our industry, what we don't use is very important.

What issues were you having that prompted the console upgrade?

It wasn't working properly, and sometimes it would cut things incorrectly. It would also, on occasion, go slowly. It was just the index cards, which are the brains of the machine in the console, had started to blow. By putting the new console on, it eradicated all those problems. It now cuts really cleanly. It cuts much quicker and more efficiently. This has made an enormous difference to the business.

Can you describe the impact of the new upgrade?

From our point of view, it eradicates mistakes. Before we had the upgrade, it used to work perfectly for about 80% of the time, but 20% of the time, unbeknown to us, within the block, it was cutting things incorrectly. Now with the upgrade, it cuts accurately with the added bonus of cutting quicker. So, the whole process means we can get things through the factory much quicker and with reduced errors.

What does this mean for the machine operators?

From not having the console, to having the console, the operator has found his life is now so much easier. From his point of view, he knows he can plan his day more effectively. With the new console, he can put a block on and confidently walk away and know it will cut correctly. He knows he can get more done in a day. He's more efficient because his workload is passing through that particular machine a lot faster.

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What have you learnt from this upgrade?

In hindsight, we think the machine was probably wobbling for about three years on and off. That's something people with older machines should know, that when you do feel that things aren't quite right, you can upgrade, and it will make a big difference.

I think we didn't appreciate the difference it actually would make, so we kept delaying placing an order for a replacement. We thought it would just make it work the same way. But it doesn't. It eradicates a lot of the errors. Equally, the thing we didn't appreciate was that it would speed the machine up. That's a real productivity gain because time is money.

In manufacturing, as well as time is money, so too is the utilisation of the foam blocks. That's where you make your profit. The product has to be correct, and you need to get it out to the customer when they need it. So improving reliability as well as speed has been really significant for us.

When you've needed support from Wintech, can you describe what support you've received?

In the UK, we have a UK-based company called Cellutec. If we have issues directly with the machine, we go through them as our first point of call. If we want any further advice, we just go onto the Wintech support system. Sometimes I phone Jim directly, or I email him, but nine times out of ten, the staff go through either Cellutec or Wintech support, and things are resolved quickly.

Over the years, the Wintech equipment hasn't really caused us that many problems. It's been the normal things, like wear and tear on the gearboxes, everything that you would expect from a machine. It's a bit like running a car. The good thing is longevity. We've still got an 18-year-old machine that's still as capable as the day we bought it all those years ago.

What has Wintech been like to deal with from your perspective?

We've always found them really good. We've found them personable. They always react. They understand the urgency for advice or a machine part. For us, that machine is such a big integral part of the company, so if it goes down completely, then we need to have somebody who's reactive because we can't lose that production capacity.

If you were talking to somebody considering upgrading their equipment or buying a similar piece of new equipment from Wintech, what would your advice be?

My advice would be to ask as many questions as possible, and I'm sure you'll get the answers you are after. You need to do this to ensure you are getting the machine that you want. We didn't bother looking at the European options because we decided that the Wintech is the far better machine. It's more capable, and it's quicker. The oscillating blade makes a much, much cleaner cut. We also have the advantage of a UK based support company, Cellutec, which minimises any potential down-time.

I think the thing you need to look at when you decide to buy a new Wintech, is which add-ons you want. From our point of view, we did the turntable because we do a lot of medical mattresses. If you're not doing medical work, then it might be something you don't need to be spending money on that. We also bought a digitising table. There is another system where you can take a photograph which goes automatically into the machine. We've found it much easier having the digitising table. It's much quicker. If you do your research, you can find out which way you want to go and what will suit your business needs by customising the Wintech for your individual needs.

How was the delivery process from Australia?

Even importing it from Australia and experiencing the delays of recent world events affecting all imports and exports, it still came here perfectly intact, with no problems. It was offloaded and installed within four days. We were incredibly happy.