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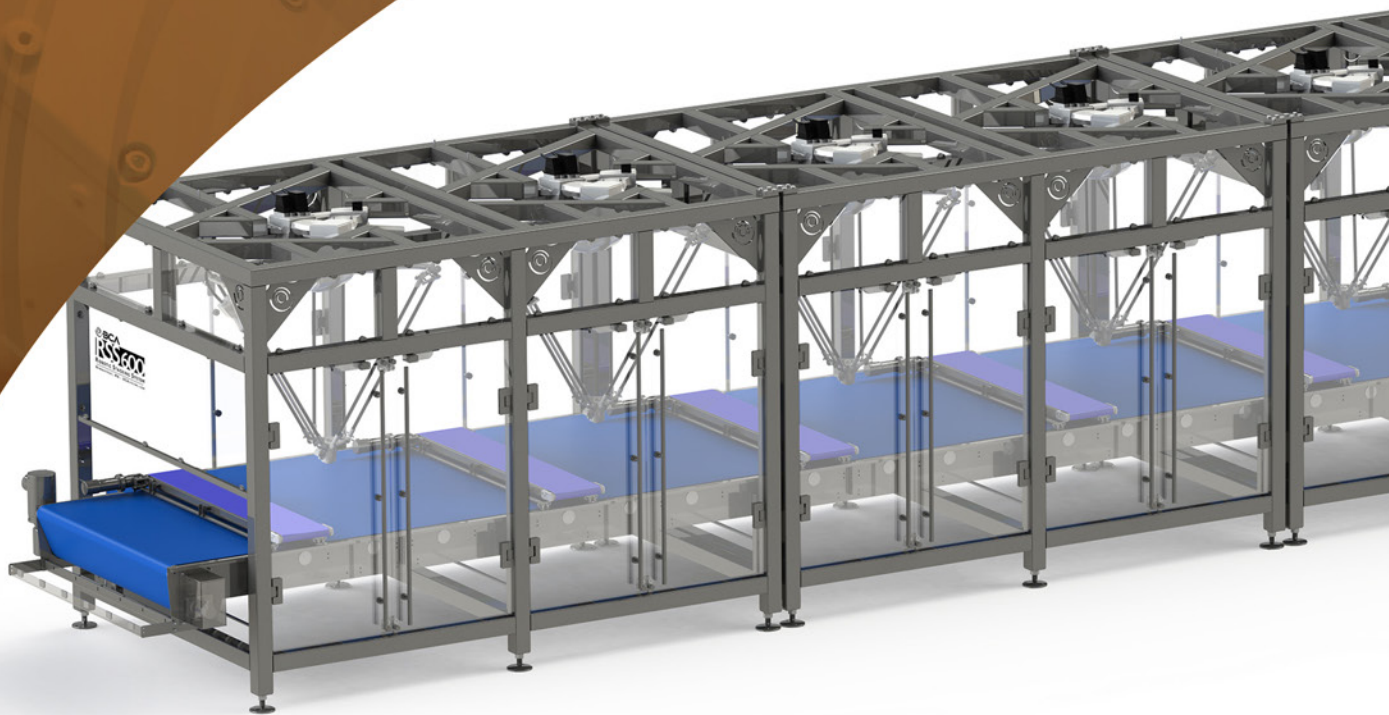


BCA
AUTOMATION & ROBOTICS



Integrated & Excellence

TAKING PACKAGING INNOVATION
OUT OF THE BOX



Written by Pauline Müller

Boston Conveyor & Automation (BCA) proudly manufactures in the USA custom stainless-steel conveyors, custom engineered hard automation, integrated robotic picking, packing, and stacking systems that serve the food and beverage, pharmaceutical, and medical device industries. Based in the beautiful, historic village of Newburyport, on the coast of

Massachusetts and strategically positioned within reach of the country's robotic engineering epicenter in Boston, BCA works with many of the largest manufacturing companies across the USA.

Companies trust BCA for its 30-plus years of innovation and technology that focuses on the process and »

- ▶ packaging of difficult-to-handle products in wet IP69K environments. Its impressive engineering staff members develop and manufacture innovative, customized solutions for everything from high-speed cutting automation to the most difficult robotic picking, packing, and stacking systems.

“Not many companies in the USA are engineering and manufacturing their own custom integrated process or packaging lines under one roof,” according to Jim Laverdiere, President and CEO of BCA. “Many of our competitors are subcontracting the conveyors, robotics, and controls. BCA has the competitive advantage to oversee each job start to finish and most importantly, to control our cost and ship dates. With our 30 years’ experience, BCA is becoming the go-to company for food automation.”

From control panel building to stainless steel fabrication, welding, polishing, assembly, and related engineering, this company does it all from a single manufacturing facility in Newburyport, MA. The benefits of such an all-inclusive skillset are evident in the number of longstanding clients the firm has welcomed over its years in business. Clients return repeatedly for its quality products that save them time and money in the long run.

Its quality guarantee is top-notch. BCA’s industrial control panels are created to UL 508A and NFPA 79 standards. It also partners with prestigious industry players like Rockwell Automation, Fanuc, B&R and Soft Robotics. It also holds many

industry certifications that cover every aspect of the safety and quality specifications of its machines.

Company founder Jim Laverdiere garnered his industry expertise from nearly thirty years spent building his first company, KLEENLine, which he opened in 1986. Laverdiere started this small stainless-steel fabricator and built it up to one of the largest stainless-steel conveyor and automation firms in the country by the time he sold it to ProMach at the end of 2012. In 2018, a few years into his retirement, Pro Mach decided to relocate the business to Atlanta, and Laverdiere decided to take action after several people approached him regarding the gaping hole that the company’s departure would leave in the local economy’s supply chain.

He still owned the manufacturing building and, “did not want to see the people who worked for me all those years get laid off. At the same time, customers who knew the company was moving called me up. In January 2018, we moved into our empty building with a few employees and in the next three months we renovated 90 percent of the building, acquired all new manufacturing equipment, and were ready for business,” Laverdiere says.

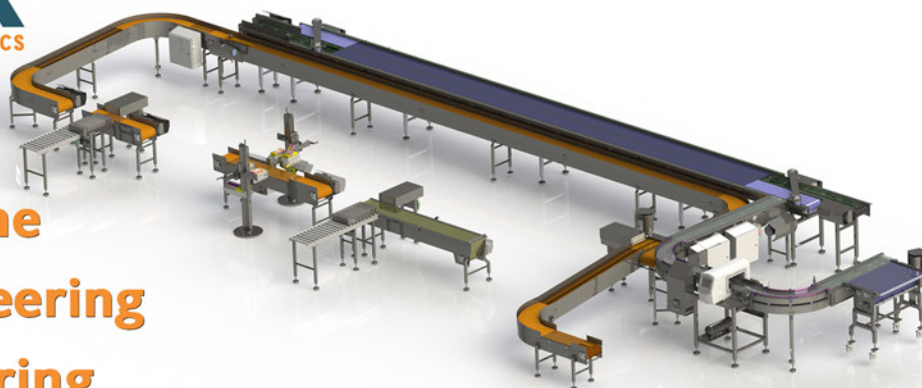
Three and a half years later, many of the original employees have returned, and the company is doing more business than when it was originally sold. For Laverdiere, receiving all those calls from previous customers and seeing the loyalty of the

“The company is well-versed in finding solutions and then taking them from the design phase to manufacture to installation and calibration at the customers’ facilities.”





Entire Production Line Design, Engineering and Manufacturing



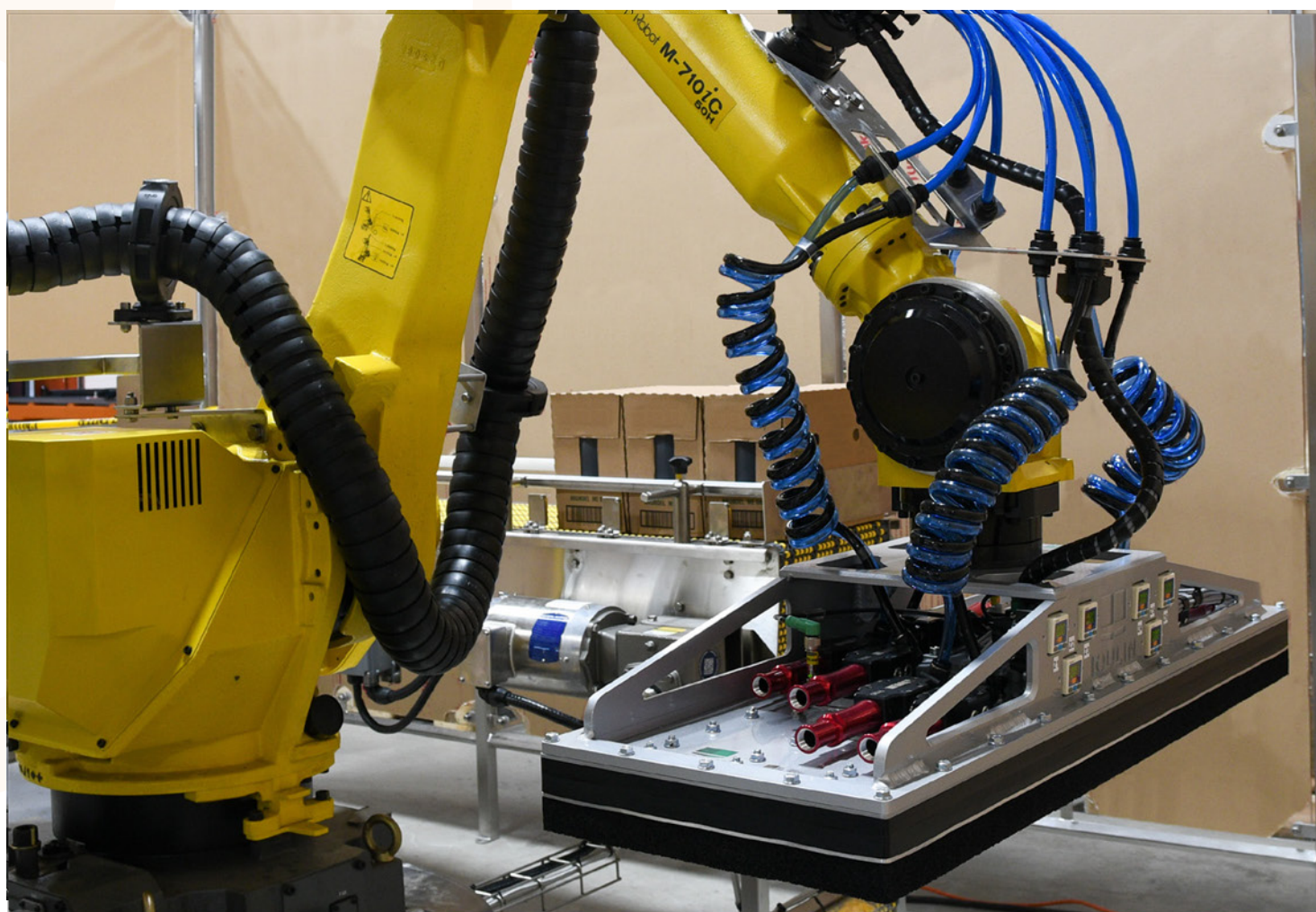
company's employees were the deciding factors in coming out of retirement.

"It's been an incredible ride. The company is growing faster now than it ever has. It is very exciting," Laverdiere says.

Comprehensive service is the term that describes BCA's offerings best. The company is well-versed in finding solutions and then taking them from the design phase to manufacture

to installation and calibration at the customers' facilities. Customers receive dependable field service and support, which is why they keep coming back. One phone call to BCA is all it takes to solve whatever complex process or packaging issue a customer might have.

Since many of the engineers in its research and development team have over thirty years of experience in the field, it stands to reason that many large clients approach the company to ►



► custom-develop and build machines that are not available for purchase elsewhere. Other clients have machines built that improve on existing equipment, helping them increase the quality of their product as well as reduce waste. This is especially evident in the story of a large market leader that commissioned BCA to create a machine that cuts brownie squares at four cuts per second. The new machine significantly improves the company's output and saves it thousands of dollars every year in preventing the waste problem with which it previously struggled.

Vice President of Sales and Marketing Nate Tennant shares a few thoughts on how the fourth industrial revolution was accelerated by COVID-19 and how it will affect automation and robotics in the future. "For any company to excel, you [have to have] a decent wave to ride. That wave is building. We see it across the industry. There are all sorts of forces at work that are driving this," he says.

Part of this growth was originally driven by manufacturers being left without human labor as COVID-19 regulations forced people to stay at home. This resulted in many companies having to introduce robotics to their facilities although they may not ever have considered it before.

At its own facility, business carried on more or less as normal during the height of the pandemic, with the exception of very few employees who opted not to be at the office during that time. Due to the nature of their work, the engineers could contribute to projects from home, and those working on the factory floor could be spaced as needed

thanks to the facility's generous size, and people who were present put in a lot of overtime so the company could get ahead despite deficits.

Of course, employees had to follow the standard safety protocols for their own and their colleagues' protection. Within twelve weeks, the work situation started returning to normal and would continue in the usual way alongside new safety precautions. Despite the obvious challenges, the company managed to employ nineteen new staff members and doubled its sales during this time, an achievement of which everyone is very proud.

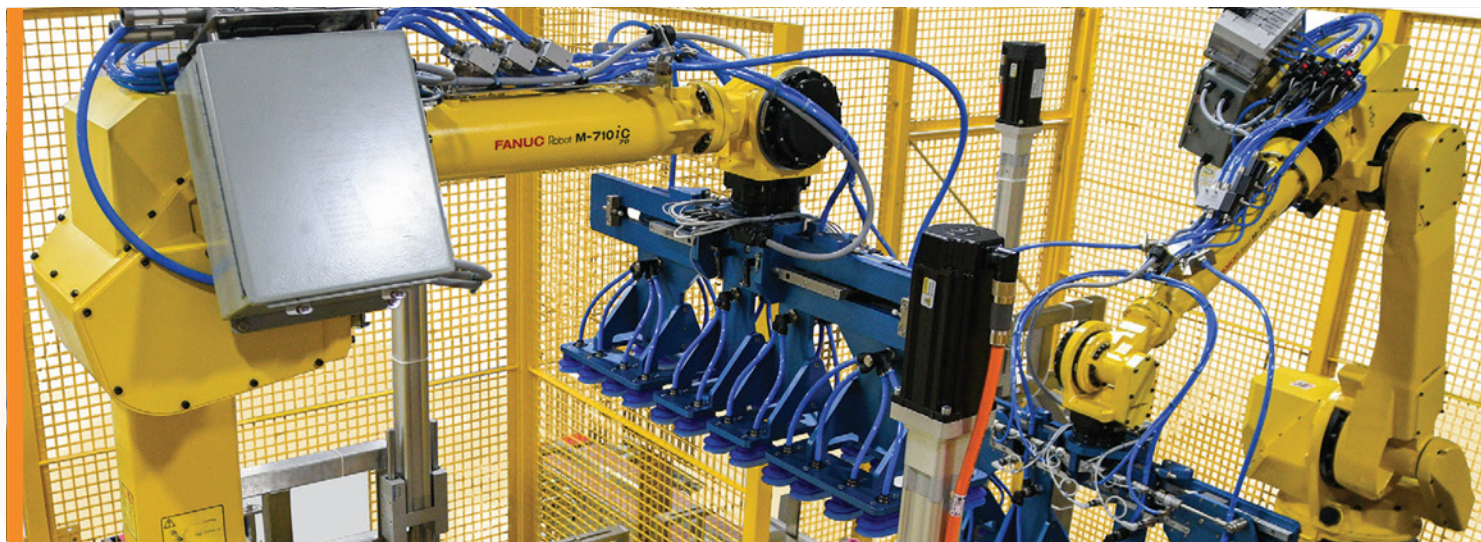
Laverdiere could not be happier with the company's employees. The secret to building a strong team, he points out, is in finding positive people. In addition to that, the company takes care of them with a generous remuneration package and creates a comfortable environment in which to work.

"I feel blessed. I believe that we have some of the best leaders in this company today," he says. Laverdiere believes in treating his staff with dignity because they genuinely matter to him. This sincere care means that many of the company's staff members have worked their way up into positions that may have been out of reach when they started here.

Another big contributor to the firm's success is Janet Laverdiere, Mr. Laverdiere's right-hand woman both in life (36 years married) and, until recently, as the company's human resources director. Mrs. Laverdiere now handles the company's charitable and community contributions.

"The company looks to attract young people who are about to enter the job market after technical school."





"My wife has always been a key player to my company's success. While raising three wonderful children Janet always had time for shop talk when I came home. Janet's positive influence and encouragement to daily life and the company and [her] support is what helps me drive this," Laverdiere says.

The company looks to attract young people who are about to enter the job market after technical school. One organization that benefits from the company's assistance is Essex North Shore Agricultural and Technical School. "We'll probably be donating iPads this year. Each new student will need an iPad for school, so we're looking at that," Laverdiere says. The company is also looking to support students in Worcester Polytechnic Institute's robotics program.

While all the company's employees are close to his heart, Laverdiere wants to recognize Dinne Flansbury, Vice President of Operations, for his strong dedication and hard work, knowledge in the industry, and competitive spirit. Dinne started

with BCA from the beginning. "I am proud to have him on my team," Laverdiere says.

Laverdiere also wants to recognize his son Joshua, aged 32. A mechanical engineer, Joshua works as the corporate accounts manager and is very dedicated to helping the company grow.

In embracing its future and taking charge of the company's growth, BCA has plans that are nothing short of bold. This year, its goals include doubling its workforce and significantly expanding its footprint through growth and possibly acquisition. "We are striving to become one of the largest food automation companies in the world," Laverdiere says. "The sincere loyalty from our employees and customers, our depth of engineering knowledge through creativity and knowhow, and being a fully vertically integrated company will get us there," Laverdiere says. ■

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