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PACKAGING AUTOMATION SEALS SUCCESS WITH INTERNATIONAL CUISINE

There's an old saying along the lines of 'nothing succeeds like success' and it is one which certainly rings true for Packaging Automation, the UK's leading manufacturer of heat-sealing machinery for the food industry.

Knutsford-based PA has had a successful relationship with one of the North-East's own success stories, ready meals producer International Cuisine Ltd, ever since the company began trading 14 years ago.

International Cuisine is now a subsidiary of Singapore Food Industries Ltd, which itself has gone from strength to strength since being set up in 1973 primarily as a supplier of food to the Singapore armed forces.

It acquired International Cuisine in 1995 and it was not long after that that the County Durham-based concern - which had originally installed PA 182 semi-automatic heat-sealing machines - turned to Packaging Automation for new machinery supplies. It was at this time that both companies were looking for a step change in their growth and development and International Cuisine needed a solution to the problem of automating the existing semi-automatic ready meal lines.

Both companies worked hand in hand to develop the automatic Vision 2080 heat sealing machine (the forerunner of the Vision 4000). International Cuisine installed four Vision 2080 machines and they have proved so successful and reliable that the company has gone back to PA yet again for another four machines, this time the best-selling Vision 4000 models.

The Vision 4000 is the latest fully-automated filling and heat sealing machine to come out of the Packaging Automation stable and sets new standards in speed and performance.

Designed and built to PA's rigorously high requirements, the Vision 4000 - the third generation of the Vision series - can seal larger and deeper trays than anything else on the market and, in the case of International Cuisine, operates

Two of the state-of-the-art machines, each with a filling conveyor, were just what International Cuisine – with its 500 plus employees - was looking for to increase capacity on the existing production lines at its Consett base and they are already proving a big hit with the employees. So much so that two more, again with filling conveyors, have just been installed in a newly-opened extension to the factory.

The quartet is being used to pack a variety of ready meals in CPET trays including pilau rice, curry and quorn meals, not to mention things like Italian and Chinese style foods - all of which find their way on to the shelves of most, if not all of the country's major retailers.

Packaging Automation's sales manager Neil Ashton said: "It is always a good feeling to get a customer coming back for more. It proves what we always say, that our machines are among the best and most reliable on the market. International Cuisine are old friends of ours who still have the six -year-old Vision 2080s running, so demonstrating the long life of PA machinery. They have been so pleased with the performance that they came straight back to us when they wanted new equipment. I think the other major factor in the decision to choose PA machines again was the unrivalled level of service we provide to our customers. ICL are fully aware of our responsiveness to their requests – which are made 24 hours a day – for support for breakdowns, installations or relocation of equipment. They chose us because we are always here to help them out."

The admiration society is a mutual one with International Cuisine's engineering director Tom Weldon adamant he has made the right choice in returning for a third time to Packaging Automation. "We must be happy with what we get from them or we would not keep going back, would we," he asks. "Fourteen years is a long association but we have been so pleased over the years that it is likely to continue for some time to come. We have decided on the Vision 4000s because they are more up-to-date than the 2080s and give us the flexibility we are looking for on our production lines."