



Highest turnover despite pandemic

by Gabriele Kosmehl

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We met:

Josep Jimenez, Sales Manager Side S.A.

Spanish plant manufacturer Side S.A. is a good example of lockdowns and pandemics not having to be the worst-case scenario for a company. Through pre-emptive action and close collaboration with customers, the company not only managed in 2021 to generate the best sales in its company history, but at the same time launched several innovations in the SBM and maintenance sectors.



Josep Jimenez and Gabriele Kosmehl

Side S.A. is known as a medium-sized supplier of blow moulding machines, especially those that produce bottles with complex technical refinements, e.g. oval bottles, bottles with complicated designs for cosmetics, or large-volume bottles with handles. But recently, in L'Ametlla del Vallès near Barcelona in Spain, a system series is also being produced that relies more firmly on speed and maximum efficiency.

"We are a small company but we are listening to what our customers are saying," says Josep Jiménez, Sales Manager at Side. "And bottle makers are interested in speed." So the company has developed the new Series 3000, which comes with up

to 8 cavities and has an output of up to 18,000 bph (see also Drinktec preview report p. 32). The company's customer base, mainly in the water, edible oil/condiments and detergents sectors, is happily adopting the new product. Three systems from the 3000 range have already been installed for customers in Brazil, Spain and the Dominican Republic. Depending on customer requirements, Side also undertakes complete installation including blowing, rotary filler and capping monobloc systems. This customer base from the water / beverages filling sector is a particular target for the high-speed lines. But to the pleasant surprise of the company, simple bottle producers are also showing an interest in the new high-speed solutions for more niche customer orders.

Innovations are also abundant in the existing machine park. As a further development of the 2-cavity

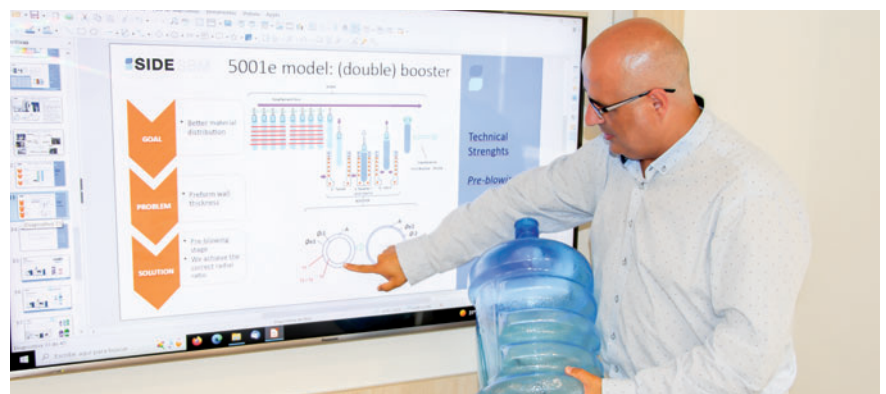
machinery 1002e, on which bottles up to 2.5l can be manufactured at an output of up to 3,800 bph, Side also brought onto the market the enhanced model 1022e 160 with an output of 4,000 bph and up to 80 mm neck finish. Bottles up to 3l in volume can be blown thanks to an increase in the centre distance of the moulds inside the machine. To meet the design demands of customers from the detergent industry, it has also been possible to enlarge the surface area.

Also launched this year was the 2002eG XL system, which is driving the expansion of large-volume bottles for water coolers or edible oil. Bottles up to 25l or up to 20l as single-use variants are manufactured on the 2-cavity machine at 2,500 bph. "This is the highest speed for these volumes currently available on the market," says Jimenez.

Using extreme situations correctly

With so much desire to innovate, it's no wonder that Side has generated the highest turnover in its company history with growth of 20% in the pandemic year of 2021. Of the 20 million euros, around 35-40% is attributed to the growing blow moulding department. With regard to electronic components, it plays into the company's strengths that they can rely on inhouse products from the Side Automatización business unit; other companies are currently enduring long waits for these.

"When Side was founded in 1974, it was a company for industrial electronics cabinets," explains Jimenez. "And like never before, electronic components make up a significant



Josep Jimenez explains the double booster system which increases the diameter of the preform before blowing.

proportion of the company. Over the years, other activities have been added, such as motors, inverters and touchscreens, and also an in-house IoT service. And naturally, we also use this expertise in our blow moulding department."

This latter was added 28 years ago, when PET started playing an increasing role in the food and beverage industry in Europe in the early 1990s. Side's owner at the time, Mr. Enric Birosta, decided to buy up a customer from the extrusion blow moulding machines sector and to refocus on stretch blow moulding machines. So the business unit Side SBM was founded.

"This connection between business areas is now a great advantage for us. Most electronic components for our systems are available in our warehouse and we can also carry out certification ourselves. Our anticipatory stock management also avoid problems regarding availability and logistics, and we can maintain capacity of 25-30 SBM systems per year," says Jimenez.

If anything, increasing transport costs, a setback for many companies, have had rather a positive effect for Side, with bottle manufacturers preferring to open branches close to their customers to save on longer transport routes – branches that naturally need to be equipped with new Side systems.

Close collaboration with the customer

Side S.A.'s remote service system has also proved successful, particularly throughout the pandemic. Four employees supported customers in After Sales matters relating to the over 750 Side machines installed worldwide. Over 90% of servicing can be carried out remotely – a high proportion that also owes its acceptance to the lockdowns. "Basically, this is the normal evolution of things, but the pandemic has helped a lot to accelerate that," says Jimenez and he adds: "We also offer our customers flexible maintenance contracts so that they don't get into emergency situations in the first place. Via IoT, we check and optimise the system. This is a growing field that is very well accepted."



Assembly hall at Side's premises near Barcelona

The app, too, which allows the customer operator to connect with the machine, relies on inhouse development. This not only provides all details for production but also data, for example about energy consumption. This is one of two hot topics among Side customers, and incentives to reduce energy consumption are being considered by Side in its new developments. This has resulted for example in the air recovery system, which is included as standard in the new 3000 Series and can be retrofitted for other models. Works with customers and the lab supplier regarding the oven are also targeting the reduction of energy consumption and these are reducing energy used by the oven by 20-25%.

In its R&D Department, Side engineers are also implementing special bottle designs for customers, prototypes, and analysing the

use of different materials. These can be organic-based plastics or different percentage levels of rPET – the second significant topic of concern for bottle producers. Besides the obvious reasons such as the circular economy or instructions from directives, Jimenez also welcomes the use of recyclates for another reason: "The use of rPET reduces the process power required. Many factors come into play here, for example the percentage proportion of recycle or the use of additives, but at least 10% power can be saved in any case – simply because the darker colouring of the preforms better absorbs the heat of the infrared lamps."

Jimenez would view an rPET proportion of 80% as a good target and is regretful that "we are unfortunately still a long way from that."

www.sidemachines.com



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Dausch
Hall B3 – Booth 357

A leap in quality monitoring for beverage ingredients as well as line parameters

For years, the company Dausch Technologies, with its LiquiGuard programme, has been offering non-alcoholic beverage bottling plants the opportunity to precisely measure and visualise even small amounts of all relevant ingredients: total acid, caffeine, base material concentration, aromas, important sweeteners, B vitamins, Na benzoate as well as K sorbate or near water flavours. This is made possible by unique optical spectroscopy methods.



The LiquiGuard Gen3 system continuously measures the beverage flow every ten seconds, processes the sample immediately and displays the result clearly in tables or charts on screens: smartphone, tablet or PC. This means continuous, fully automated quality monitoring of all relevant beverage parameters.

However, what is completely new at Drinktec is that LiquiGuard Gen3, with the Quality Dashboard module, can not only process its "own" quality values, but also all data from all manufacturers involved: bottle weight, closure and torque, tightness of cans (seam parameters), carbon dioxide content, brix, conductivity, and much more. Consequently, the operating personnel on the line, as well as in the syrup room, in the quality assurance laboratory or even on the move, can query and check all values of the entire filling line at any time, in real time.

www.dausch-technologies.de

S3000 series: faster speeds, less energy

Side S.A. says that its 3000 series blowing machines are designed to provide high production capacities for mineral water and soft drinks bottling in medium-sized facilities.

The S3008 offers outputs in excess of 18,000 bph in 500 ml formats from eight cavities and is capable of producing containers of up to 2.5l. It is the only machine currently available that can work with 38 mm necks.

The 3000 series includes three other blowing models. Two are aimed at large format containers for capacities such as five and eight litres. The five-cavity version has outputs up to 6,500 bph; the four-cavity model can produce 4,000 10l bph. Options such as preferential ovens for blowing oval bottles can be integrated. The new range allows blowing machines to be interconnected with filling and capping monoblocs, minimising machine footprint.

Power and air consumption savings

The reconfigured transport system and oven enable 3000 series blowing machines to deliver power consumption savings of over 20%, compared to previous models. The air recovery system is also more efficient, reducing consumption by 40%, the company says.



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Side
Hall C5 – Booth 235

Side offers the option of installing complete blowing, filling and capping systems for bottlers of water, soft drinks, juices, dairy products, oils and detergents or cosmetics.

Other developments

Side S.A.'s new version of its 1002e+ 160ec blowing machine can blow wide-mouth containers up to 83 mm, using a hybrid loading system. The new 2002eGXL blowing machine can produce up to 1,600 bph in 16l formats and is capable of producing stackable 25l one-way containers. The 5001eG's newly developed preform stretching system provides capacities of 280-300 5l returnable carboys per hour, even in containers with an inserted handle. This system can increase diameter without decreasing inside temperature, thus reducing the cycle time and improving material distribution throughout the container.

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Label Lab

Multi-Color Corporation (MCC) returns to Munich with the introduction of The Label Lab where their experts will inform about the latest developments and innovations in beverage labelling. A strong focus will be placed on sustainable label solutions including everything from recyclable PSL to floatable shrink sleeves and wash-off labels for returnable bottles.

MCC's Sustainability Director, Stijn Billiet will be hosting focussed seminars and interactive discussions on sustainability. The company will also emphasise on how next-gen labels help products win the battle for the shelf. MCC will display a variety of interactive options for packaging that includes functional inks that react to UV/sunlight, black lights,

heat/cold, etc. Inspiring examples of how labels can appeal to all of the senses using unique inks and materials will be highlighted.

Smart packaging: the connected consumer

Augmented reality, QR codes, and scannable labels are a great way to engage consumers and provide an interactive experience, as well as more efficiently and effectively manage a company's inventory. MCC will provide an industry update on the use of RFID and EAS tag use in packaging, including retailers demand and how MCC is positioning for the future.

www.mcclabel.com

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MCC
Hall C6 – Booth 326