



Natura Customer Story

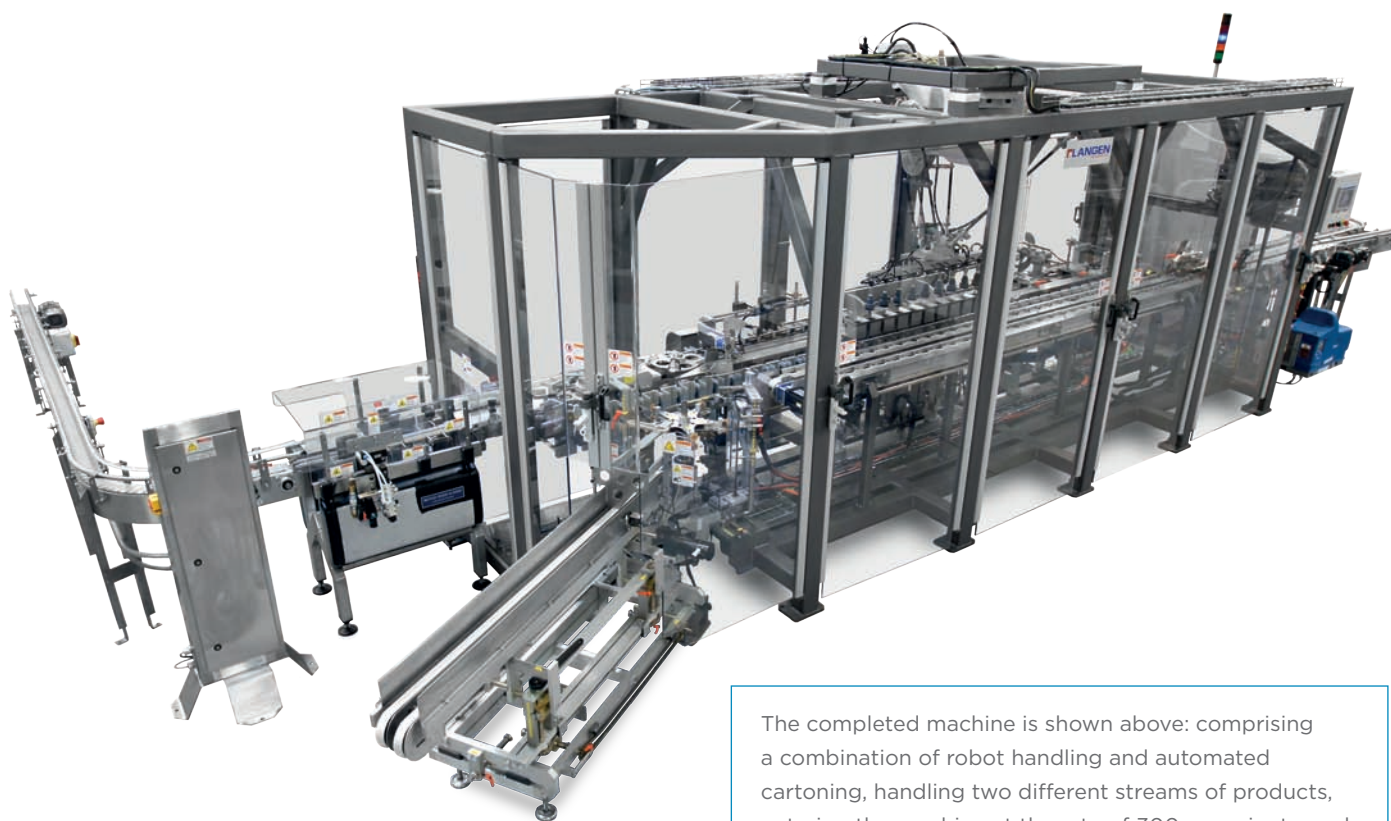
Natura is one of Brazil's longest-established and most successful consumer goods companies, selling not just cosmetics but also products that promote well being. The company's business model is based on direct selling to consumers by a network of agents, more than 1.5 million of them today, who build up close, trust-based customer contacts, in which sound advice, friendship and goodwill have proved to be key drivers for growth.

The client

Today the company operates right across South and Central America and France, and is evolving into an international brand for the 21st Century. Natura's goal is to ensure a triple-win for all its operations: measured in profit; safeguarding the environment; and contributing to the Brazilian society. This vision is a fundamental aspect of Natura's decision to work with Langen on one of its most exciting and ambitious new projects.

The challenge

Despite its leadership in cosmetics and personal care, Natura had not been one of the leaders in soaps until comparatively recently. Soap packaging had therefore been outsourced to specialist partners, using traditional methods, in which packs are filled by hand. Now the economics have changed as a result of two different product launches, which have led to explosive growth in Natura's soap business.



The completed machine is shown above: comprising a combination of robot handling and automated cartoning, handling two different streams of products, entering the machine at the rate of 300 per minute each with a combined total of 600 per minute altogether. Each of the two production lines are equipped with a 5 head rotary carton feeder, opening and feeding the cartons onto the cartoner's lugs, one at a time. The robot then loads the soap bars into the open cartons until the full complement of 5 products per carton has been completed.

It began with development of a medium-priced product: Natura Toda Dia, sold in packs of five and prized by consumers as an excellent, high quality everyday soap.

As volumes rose dramatically, it has become more difficult and costly to keep up with demand.

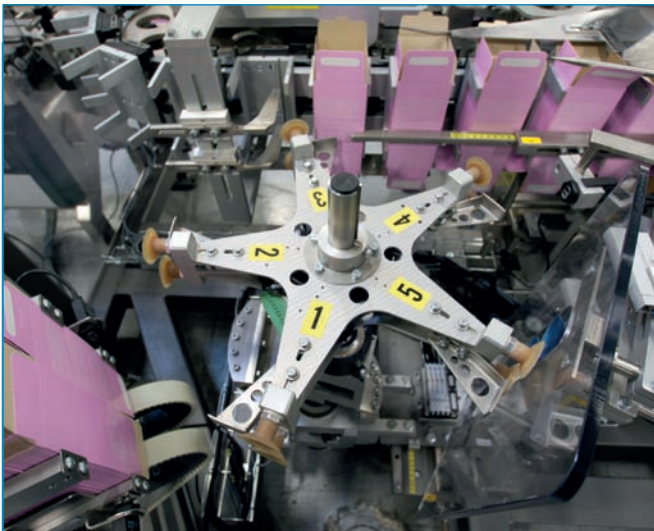
The second product launch has been transformational. The Natura Ekos line uses oils and seeds drawn from the Amazon rain forest or from Brazilian Biodiversity, and its success matches the environmental promise of the Natura brand. All raw materials are carefully harvested from areas of forest that were in danger of destruction. Thanks to Natura, these trees are now preserved for sustainable use. In addition, the 3000 families harvesting materials for Natura are able to stay in their own homes and make a good living, rather than move to the cities. It's a perfect exam-

ple of the triple-win targeted by the company, and consumers across South America that have rewarded Natura's vision with rapid growth. That is where the challenge arose.

The project

Natura opened discussions with five different packaging specialists, based in Europe and North America and Langen was part of this group of potential partners.

The specification was for a single machine able to handle 600 individual items per minute, with the entire process, from entry of individual bars of soap to packaging five bars into a single carton, followed by loading filled cartons into cases for transit. It was clear from the start that no "off the shelf" solution existed, so the key requirement was to build a new product that would answer Natura's needs precisely, and that is what Langen did.



The traditional way of automating a process as complex as this is to use two separate cells, but Langen's innovative approach not only speeds up the process significantly, it also makes it less time-consuming and therefore more efficient. The image above shows the automated mechanism for synchronising the two different stages of packaging, ensuring that the automatic carton erecting process and robotic product-loading happen in perfect harmony, delivering the right blend of speed and accuracy at all times.



Precision is crucial, both for reasons of efficiency and to safeguard quality. Natura brand, has a premium quality product, and each individual bar of soap must be perfect when it leaves the plant. No marks or defects are permissible, so speed alone is not enough. Automated handling at each different stage has to be precise, consistent and reliable. Achieving this almost unique combination of automation and perfection proved difficult, but Langen was able to demonstrate its ability to meet Natura's expectations in a way that no other company could do.



The Langen Group, part of Molins PLC (LSE: MLIN), develops, manufactures and markets end-of-line packaging and product handling solutions from cartoning through to palletizing. We specialize in high speed, high quality equipment for business critical FMCG applications such as food, pharmaceuticals, personal care, and beverages. The Langen Group operates world-wide and has an installed base of over 4,000 machines. To find out more, please visit: WWW.LANGENGROUP.COM

All information given in this document is dependent upon final machine specification, infeed arrangement, product type and carton specification.

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