



*“The requirements for successful modernization are knowledge of the customer’s operations and needs, careful planning and close cooperation with the customer;” lists Timo Tietäväinen, project manager at Cimcorp.*

# Modernization to the rescue

Customer service usually means more than just fast problem solving and careful maintenance of equipment. Jarkko Männistö of HK Ruokatalo (one of the largest food companies in the Baltic) and Timo Tietäväinen of Cimcorp tell us of the excellent results from a modernization project that was planned together and carried out efficiently.

HK Ruokatalo’s Vantaa factory stores the meat mixture that forms the raw material for sausages in large stainless steel vats, which are moved by a remote-controlled stacker crane. The vats are placed on shelves against the walls of the several storeys high warehouse. The stacker crane, which is controlled from the process control room, takes them to the production hall as required. The storage conditions are demanding: the temperature is the same as a refrigerator and the air humidity is high. The continuous and effective operation of this intermediate storage facility is a crucial factor in sausage production.

## The challenge

During 2003 it was found that the vat stacker crane, which was over ten years old, was coming to the end of its life cycle. Its lifting power

Storage conditions at HK Ruokatalo's Vantaa factory are demanding: the temperature is the same as in a refrigerator and the air humidity is high. The continuous and effective operation of this intermediate storage facility is a crucial factor in sausage production.



and operational reliability could no longer meet the growing demands placed on the stacker crane. On the other hand, shutdowns for repairs were increasing.

"These were uneconomic from the customer's point of view," says **Timo Tietäväinen**, the project leader from Cimcorp. "I was involved when we supplied the previous equipment, and we were responsible for its service and maintenance. It no longer made sense to repair the old stacker crane, which had become a bottleneck due to its capacity. HK Ruokatalo decided to have a new stacker crane and control system. The targets set in addition to improved operational reliability were to increase the profitability of the vat warehouse and to facilitate the work of the staff."

It was decided to carry out the modernization at Easter 2004. The schedule was extremely tight: the time for carrying out the modernization itself i.e. dismantling the old machinery and installing the new, testing, start-up and personnel training was only six days altogether.

"There was no room for mistakes or stretching out the timetable. The peak delivery time to customers was only two weeks after the scheduled completion date," says **Jarkko Männistö**, project manager at HK Ruokatalo.

"In addition to dismantling and assembly, the existing warehouse management computer and software had to be updated to be compatible with the stacker crane's Crane Box control system."

## The solution

HK Ruokatalo selected Cimcorp's turnkey bid. Planning of the modernization began together

in good time. The suitability of the stacker crane and the adequacy of its capacity were carefully tested using a storage vat supplied by HK. "We drew up a detailed design proposal for HK Ruokatalo for the project lead-in with a division of responsibilities," recalls Tietäväinen. "Once we had gone through all the details carefully with the customer about the dismantling of the old stacker crane and the installation routes of the new one, we were in a good position to carry out the work."

The modernization was implemented much quicker than planned. The new equipment was installed and tested two days ahead of the original schedule, so the operator training could be started earlier and more time allowed for it. "Our expectations were high, but the supplier was able to surpass them," says Männistö. "We were prepared to support the installation work with our own standby staff, and had also reserved capacity from our service company. They didn't need any help from us however, and the supplier finished the job unaided. The equipment started to work as expected straightaway, so there were no difficulties starting up production. The deliveries to our customers were made without any problems."

"The project is a good example of modernization, where good planning and cooperation produce results," says Tietäväinen. "The maintenance, servicing and repair of equipment at the end of its life cycle that had become a bottleneck was no longer economically feasible for the customer. The well-planned, fast performance made a positive impression on the supplier too. Our long-term cooperation now has good chances of continuing in the future."

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In addition to improved operational reliability, the aims of modernizing the stacker crane and its control system were to increase the profitability of the vat warehouse and to facilitate the work of the staff.