



PRESS RELEASE

Robots take essential role at King Automotive

King Automotive Systems Limited based in Coventry is a successful power train components supplier that has embraced robotics in a structured manner over the past six years. When tendering for new contracts, robots are now seen as an essential resource requirement to allow them to remain competitive against overseas businesses.

Part of the global Amtek Group, King Automotive Systems competes against businesses in China and India to produce high quality components for customers including Jaguar, Land Rover, Renault, Ford and BMW. Six years ago the company installed its first FANUC robot into a brake disc manufacturing cell.

A senior manufacturing manager for King, commented, "Robots, when justified, are always part of our strategic manufacturing plan when tendering for new programmes. Competing against overseas suppliers means that our labour costs are generally higher so we aim to remove as much of that cost from the job as possible.

"Though it's important for us to reduce labour cost, it's not the only justification for using robots – control of our quality, cost and delivery are all improved by automation and these are core areas where we remain highly competitive."

King went out to tender six years ago for a robotics supplier and selected FANUC Robotics – since then a very strong relationship has developed involving FANUC at an early tendering stage of new projects. Acting in a consultancy role, FANUC's sales engineering support team analyse automation requirements with King helping to identify the most efficient and cost effective automation solution.

Its first 'confidence building' installation was for loading castings into a disc machining cell. The manager explains, "We chose this first application, which was already operating with operators loading machines, for several reasons; All existing machines were in close proximity to each other, it was labour intensive and at the time there was capacity available to stop the cell while implementing the system and fine tuning it – an important consideration when retrofitting robots to an existing system.

"In system engineering terms it was relatively straight-forward with the robot taking a disc from a loading area and handling it through two machine centres. It saved 50% of operators over three shifts and gave us the confidence we now have to always consider robots for any new tenders."

Six years down the road now and King has installed 11 FANUC robots and maintains a competitive position in its European automotive sector. King now approaches applications with confidence, it uses vision systems as a routine requirement and its work force accepts this as a necessary requirement to succeed, the Manager, explains, "You would in the early days [of robot installations at King] get resistance to technology, but any issues have now been removed as the workforce understand the necessity to remain competitive and in fact benefit by being moved onto to less

arduous and less repetitive tasks – now the robot does the ‘less skilled’ tasks.”

King’s two latest lines are producing knuckle joints for BMW’s MINI and for the Land Rover Freelander. The MINI line has 7 machine centres with two FANUC robots loading and two deburring and the Freelander has three machine centres with one FANUC robot loading and deburring.

Components are loaded onto a pallet conveyor which positions product in a handling area for the robots to load and unload the joints. Each cell is manned by one setter operator and there are three shifts. Without robots on this typical application King would not have been competitive on these products.





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Notes to editors:

FANUC Robotics UK Limited provides integrated robotic process solutions for manufacturing industry. A wholly owned subsidiary of FANUC Limited of Japan, FANUC Robotics has been established in the UK since 1982. Operating from its 2,200 sq mtr facility in Coventry, FANUC employs over 45 staff, and supports an installed UK base approaching 6,000 robots.

FANUC Limited was established in 1972 and employs over 2000 people world-wide. Based at the foot of Mt Fuji near Lake Yamanaka FANUC's factory uses over 1000 FANUC robots to support the production of over 24,000 robots per annum. The global installed base of Fanuc robots is over 200,000.