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Issued: 08/08

PRESS RELEASE

Crown's new jewels are pair of KUKA robots

A long-established UK furniture manufacturer believes more British businesses should be using higher levels of automation after successfully boosting its efficiency with a pair of KUKA robots.

Crown Products, based in Herne Bay, Kent, has transformed two repetitive and time-consuming processes into slick, high-performance operations that have not only helped productivity but also further improved the working environment for staff.

One of the KUKA KR16 robots is being used to put shelf edging material on to a range of kitchen corner cabinet panels which typically weigh around 10kg. The robot is equipped with a distance measuring sensor for identifying the correct size of melamine panel for processing.

The KR16 performs a series of tasks which begins with the transfer of the panel to a jig where it is centred before being placed on to a gluing station where the edging strip is applied and pressed into place.

The robot then manoeuvres the panel to a set of cutting blades for trimming the edges and completes the operation by passing the finished panel over a strip of sand paper.

The second KUKA KR16 robot is undertaking a quality control function by rapidly inspecting the depth and location of drill holes on kitchen panels. It carries out the operation in 20-30 seconds compared with several minutes under the previous manual method.

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Both cells were installed and programmed by Martin Head, Crown's manufacturing manager, after he completed a KUKA training course. In partnership with KUKA, he was keen to develop a high level of understanding about robotics in order to produce a bespoke automation solution for the business.

"My main objective for this project was to automate the most complex process, which involved the application of the edging material on to the panels, so that it would mean more straightforward applications could be considered in the future. I think KUKA robots are brilliant. They are very easy to operate and simple to program. KUKA has provided good training, technical and after-sales support and was very committed to working with Crown to develop the right solution," commented Martin.

"The introduction of these robots means members of staff have been transferred to other more skilled positions elsewhere in the factory. This project demonstrates how easy it is to efficiently and reliably transform arduous and repetitive processes, highlighting the fact that more UK manufacturers should be using robotic automation to gain a competitive advantage," he added.

Crown Products, established for more than 60 years, manufactures kitchen and bedroom furniture under the Imperial brand for distributors in the UK and some parts of Europe. It has an annual turnover in excess of £20million and employs around 90 staff.

For more details on KUKA robots and automated production solutions, visit the KUKA website at www.kuka.co.uk or email sales@kuka.co.uk.



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