



ABB drive provides the secret ingredient at food mixing plant

Condiments and soups mixed at Baxters Food Group's Colchester mixing plant are all now back on the menu following the speedy installation of a new drive by ABB Value Provider Gibbons.

A sudden failure on a 750 kilo batch sampling machine used for mixing sauce and dressing recipes almost caused a sticky situation at condiment manufacturer Baxters, threatening potential downtime and lost production. The machine, which is used for mixing small batches for approval, is a vital step in fine-tuning recipes before they move to the mass production stage. Use of the machine is very carefully scheduled, often very far in advance, making any downtime potentially highly disruptive.

The mixer requires a high degree of

precision control, as over- or under-agitation of the product can ruin its quality, while recipes must be followed carefully to ensure that products achieve the desired colour, consistency and taste for maximum customer satisfaction. An unexpected failure to a non-ABB drive used to control the machine's 8.5 kW motor was discovered at the start of what was supposed to be a busy morning shift of batch tests. Since the drive delivers the close control required for mixing the products, the machine cannot run without it in operation. Trevor Goff, Senior Engineer at Baxters, contacted food & beverage drive specialists Gibbons in the hope of a speedy solution.

Gibbons, an ABB Value Provider, were on-site within two hours of the failure being reported. Gibbons had a suitable replacement ABB

drive in stock, and were able to install and commission it by the same afternoon. Further inspection of the failed drive later revealed that water ingress was the likely cause of failure. Once installed, Gibbons optimised the ABB drive to ensure that it was operating at maximum efficiency while delivering the speed range required, and also provided training to Baxters' engineering team to familiarise them with the drive's controls.

Baxters were extremely pleased with the outcome, as Trevor Goff explains: "We do something in the region of 28,000-30,000 bottles per day, so any downtime can be extremely detrimental to our operations. Normally we schedule trials up to a fortnight in advance so that we can have everything ready for when the customer turns up to taste their products. We immediately realised we had a problem when the old drive wouldn't start up, so I contacted Gibbons straight away with the drive's ID plate, and they were on-site within a couple of hours with a replacement that ticked all the boxes. It does everything the old drive does, plus it's gone into a very tight cabinet, and it's very user-friendly. We've had no issues with it at all since the installation."

"The importance of having a good relationship with a local drive specialist cannot be overstated," continues Goff, "I've used other companies in the past, even ones that were based nearer, but none have been able to come close to Gibbons' response time. When they arrived on-site they already had the new drive ready to go, and were very efficient and methodical in installing it."



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