

# Wemhöner & Sittex for JJO

More than 20 years of near faultless service from their old Wemhöner made the choice a simple one when JJO wanted a new, more automated pressing line.

**JJ Ormerod** is a name that requires little introduction. Established towards the back end of the 19th century, it's a successful family company with a reputation for manufacturing kitchens, bedrooms and bathrooms, which are sold either directly through a UK-wide network of independent specialist retailers, or to the contract trade.

Production Director, Robert Myers, explains: "You won't see the name JJO on the kitchens we sell through retailers. You might see Avalon Kitchens or Eco Kitchens, Holcombe Bedrooms or Eco Bathrooms – those are our brands – but mostly we brain-box everything and put whatever label the retailer wants on it.

"We supply across the UK from Lands End to John O'Groats. We have our own fleet of trucks and the long-distance wagons go out fully loaded on a Monday, return on a Wednesday to reload and come back on a Friday. We deliver everywhere in the UK five days a week.

"We also have three other outlets and a bathroom assembly site. Rossendale Interiors Stacksteads operates as a showroom for existing and prospective

retail partners. We also retail to the local community. Rossendale Interiors Ulverston is a long-standing retail showroom with family connections. Marshall House is our Trade and Collection Centre. Victoria Works warehouses bathroom furniture components and assembles furniture to order."

Employing 310 people and with a turnover of around £40m, JJ Ormerod runs a two-shift system on the manufacturing side, six until two and two until ten, with the warehouse running from eight in the morning until five in the afternoon. Efficiency is high on Robert's agenda. He's also keen on ensuring consistently high standards – a reason, he says, why JJO only works with panel product and vinyl suppliers like Egger, Finsa and Kronospan.

All manufacturing is done on site in Rawtenstall: "We convert it, cut it, edge it, drill it and package it. It's the same on the vinyl side. For our doors, our board comes from Finsa. We cut out the blanks, route and profile them, spray, press and package everything."

With prices rising, especially energy

prices, Robert has a keen eye on production enhancing investment opportunities: "We purchased an IMA line in 2003 but over the years we've diversified into different markets and had to change some of our machinery to keep pace with demand.

We changed the first combination line so we could machine smaller panels and get into the bathroom sector. The second combination line we changed three years ago, purely because of its age. The drills behind it we changed seven years ago to take advantage of developing technology, increase production and reduce manufacturing costs.

Recently, one of the areas we decided could benefit most from investment was the door pressing line.

"Back in 2001 we bought a Wemhöner press and it's served us very well. It's still a very good press, in great condition and we've never had any problems with. Once you turn it on and it reaches operating temperature, it stays at that temperature and it burns electricity all day long. Although we'd never had a problem with it, we knew the newer presses were more energy

efficient and could give us both the energy savings we required and the increased production. We also wanted an automated solution for vinyl doors, that included automatic trimming of the pressed panels, so along with the Wemhöner press we also invested in a Sittex automatic trimming line."

The new Wemhöner 3d Variopress and Sittex pressing and trimming line was commissioned in late spring 2022 and pretty much from the offset it met Robert's production requirements.

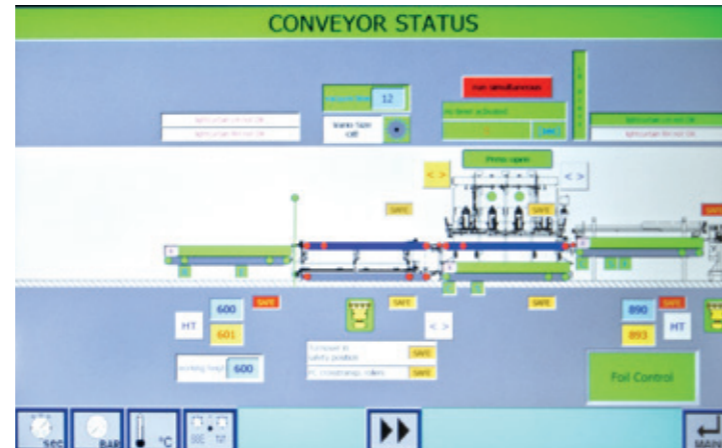
The new press has laser temperature control that reduces its energy consumption and within two weeks of being commissioned it was already demonstrating increased throughput performance and had provided a sizeable 30% uplift in productivity. "That's purely because the pressure we can achieve with this new Wemhöner reduces the cycle time from three minutes to two," Robert told me. "In round numbers, the old press could do up to 20 cycles per hour; the new press can do up to 27 in the same time. The old press



Robert Myers



1 & 2: The boards are laid on the press tray by two operators.  
 3: The press tray drops down on a scissor lift and travels through the base of the press.  
 4: The foil is automatically pulled over the door blanks and the Wemhöner Variosize system automatically reduces the size of the press tray and foil cut-off according to the number of panels on the tray.  
 5: The roll paternoster takes up to 20 rolls.  
 6: Pressed panels are conveyed to the board turning device.  
 7 & 8: Pressed panels are turned through 180 degrees with an automatic turnover device.  
 9: The Wemhöner places the pressed panels onto a conveyor.



was six bar; the new press is eight bar, so you have more pressure with less heat. That means better performance, especially with high gloss foils."

Aside from greater energy efficiency and increased productivity, Robert also wanted to reduce staffing on the pressing line from four people to three. He's achieved that: two staff at the front end lightly sand the surface of each of the pre-glued and dried door blanks before placing them on the pressing tray. Although the Sittex can cope with mixed sizes and scans each pressed door before trimming it whatever angle the doors are placed on the tray, the unique VarioPin® system helps the operators to locate panels squarely – and it's plain to see as you watch them work that they do like everything perfect, even though the system doesn't require that. A third operator recovers the panels after trimming on the Sittex, disposes of the waste foil and quality

checks each panel as it comes out of the brushing unit.

The press size of the new machine is 2540mm x 1250mm – the same as the old Wemhöner – but the footprint of the new machine is a lot larger, more than anything because of the additional space taken up by the Sittex trimming line: "The old press is a roundabout system where the new one is a straight-line machine through which the panels travel backwards and forwards," Robert explained.

"When we first bought the Wemhöner in 2001, we purchased a Gottschild trimming line as well, purely to semi-automate the process because back then we had quite a few people trimming by hand. The Sittex gives us the opportunity to reduce the manpower required to operate the press even further.

"The panels go straight through the press to the trimming line without any manual

intervention. Each is scanned where previously we had to trim every door out individually and place it on the trimming line. Now we don't touch it. The Wemhöner presses all the panels in the tray, turns the tray over and sends it to the trimming area where it's scanned and trimmed automatically. The trimming knife does the rest and the panel comes out completely finished. The quality is much better."

It's a fascinating process to watch:

The boards are laid on the press tray by two operators who work in tandem from both sides. Once fully loaded, the press tray drops down on a scissor lift and travels through the base of the press, coming up on a scissor lift at the other end. The foil is automatically pulled over the door blanks, dropped into place and cut. The press tray then goes into the press so the pressing process can take place.

After pressing, the tray leaves the press where it's turned over 180 degrees with an automatic turnover device that removes it from the Wemhöner, feeds it onto a conveyor and transfers it to the Sittex for trimming – all while the next tray is being readied.

Once the turnover device has off-loaded the tray onto the Sittex conveyor, the Sittex knows there is a fresh charge of product on the way and as it enters the Sittex, the whole pressing is scanned. Multiple sizes, shapes and thicknesses of panel can be combined in the same pressing and regardless of the dimensions of the individual doors, the scanner relays the exact position, shape, thickness and size to the robot trimming arm. It only takes a few seconds.

While Sittex manufacture a double trimming arm machine – believed to be the first one of its kind on the market – Robert opted for a single arm alternative. The robot

arm, equipped with a single rotating knife, trims out the doors accurately and at high speed, following the parameters provided to it by the scanner. Each door is separated perfectly.

Once all the individual doors have been trimmed out, the door set is transferred by conveyor to the third operator position where it pauses so unwanted foil from the process can be removed by hand. Finally, still in the original layout on the conveyor, the doors continue through a brushing machine, which takes away any residual glue over-spray and removes any sharp edges or imperfections on all the doors simultaneously as they pass through. Each panel is then manually off-loaded from the off-feed table and visually checked before stacking.

"The only difference for staff was moving from a roundabout to a line press, which slightly alters some of the handling," says Robert. "All the programs and sequences we

had in the old press transferred easily to the new one.

"It's very, very easy to create a new program. We have a configured set of heat, pressure and time. That's it. The foil manufacturers also give us guidance on their products that we can also enter in the program. Sometimes we have to adjust a few of the parameters but that's about all. What we have now is a much faster, more efficient system and we're very, very pleased with it."

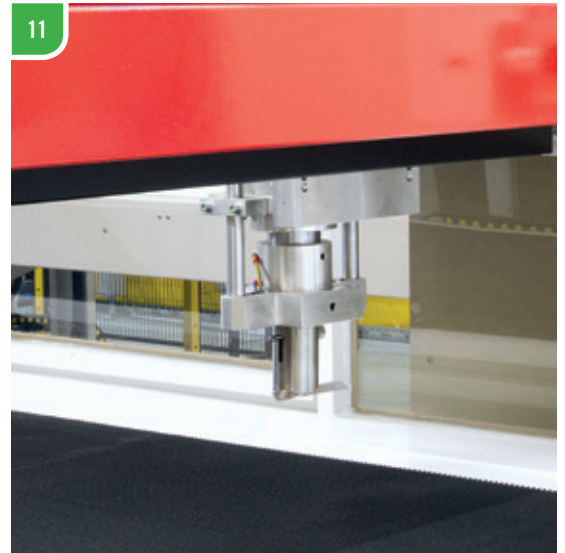
I realise it's a no-brainer but I have to ask the question: with so many alternatives in the market, why did Robert choose to invest in a Wemhöner and Sittex line?

"The performance of the Wemhöner we already have has been superb and the reliability has been really excellent. The service we've been given by Wemhöner made it not worthwhile to look elsewhere. We know





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10: Panels move to the Sittex for scanning.  
11: The robot arm is equipped with a single rotating knife.  
12: Each door is separated perfectly.  
13: Once all the individual doors have been trimmed out, the door set is transferred by conveyor to the third operator position.  
14: Unwanted foil from the process is removed by hand before the panels enter the brushing machine.  
15: Each panel is manually off-loaded from the off-feed table and visually checked before stacking.

there are other presses on the market but the support we have received over the years makes Wemhöner the only choice for us.

“If it was down to pounds, shillings and pence and we only looked at the initial cost of the press, we’d probably have spent less by going elsewhere but the expertise Wemhöner has in pressing is second to none and the machine we already had has proven itself to be more than reliable over two decades. Finding a comparable company with a machine of that build quality and starting a new

relationship wasn’t something we wanted to do. We are a loyal company. Unless there is a real need because of market influences, we stay with our suppliers. In combination with the Sittex machine, we’ve got a great system that does everything we need. You can’t say fairer than that.”

For more information on Wemhöner, visit [www.wemhoener.de/en](http://www.wemhoener.de/en) or call 07715 994840. For more information on Sittex, use the same number or visit [www.sittex.it/default.asp?lang=EN](http://www.sittex.it/default.asp?lang=EN)