

# Increased competitiveness at global manufacturing company through an automated wheel rim painting line



## Introducing a New Line of Product in the North American Market

Every day, millions of people drive to work without ever giving a second thought to the very important component that they are rolling on – the wheels!!

A global company in the chemicals, synthetic materials, ceramics, and metal products business with operations in Europe and Asia decided to open a “state-of-the-art”, highly automated plant in North America to produce automotive alloy rims.

Being their 1<sup>st</sup> plant of this type in North America, certain challenges were a given fact, for example: special electrical standards and specifications, different technology types and industry regulations.

Committed to certain delivery time with their brand new clients, the chemical company relied on an exclusive selection of partners to bring experience, know-how and a history of completing projects on time and within budget.

Real Time Systems Inc. (RTS) was the chosen Major Automation Contractor (MAC), among a hand-picked group of companies selected to work on this project.

## Automating a Wheel Rim Painting Line

Specifically, RTS’ task was to provide electrical controls design, control panel fabrication, SCADA and control system software programming, commissioning, start up support and production training for the entire line.

The overall project involved a wide variety of interconnected processes and systems that were successfully automated by RTS, including:

### Multiple robotic material transfer systems



Material load and unload between conveyors was done in a seamless “on-the-fly” motion by robots.

### System wide air handling

Specific air handling units provided supply, exhaust and recirculation air for the ovens and paint booths.

### Kilometer of overhead chain and floor conveyors



The line used three separate material handling conveying systems, one overhead and two in-floor conveyors.

### 15 stage chemical pretreatment and rinse stations



The line prepares the rim's alloy metal surface for liquid and powder painting using a 15 stage pre-treatment system, supported by 10 chemical

dosing, mixing and storage vessels, all with their own pumping, flow and temperature control systems.

### Automated multiple coating (spraying) application



A variety of alloy rims with different dimensions (17" – 22" inch diameter) had to be accommodated at a production rate of 300 rims/hour.

### Coating, curing ovens & rim cooling tunnels



Temperature control and energy management were critical to the controls architecture to ensure cost optimization for the process.

## **Productivity + Quality = Competitiveness**

Once in full production, the control systems operated the continuous line completely in automatic mode. Operators only needed to provide uncoated rims to the loading robots and receive the coated rims for quality inspection prior to palletizing.

The system automatically started each day and stopped according to a preprogrammed weekly schedule.



RTS' ability to complete the project on time and within budget, in a professional manner, was critical to ensure productivity and quality on every single piece that was manufactured.

This fully automated line increased the customer's competitiveness as an automotive supplier to the North American and ultra high-end European luxury car market.



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USA and Canada: (416) 798-2511