Case Study

WeaveMaster maximises efficiency at Alex Begg & Co

The recent installation of a Barco WeaveMaster system at Alex Begg & Co in Ayr, Scotland, has provided the company with an exceptional tool according to David Woodhouse, Production Director.

Alex Begg & Co, a member of the Yorklyde Group, makes top quality scarves, shawls and rugs in plains, checks and plaids, woven in cashmere and lambswool. It supplies some of the top designer names worldwide with fashion accessories.

Although its origins date back to the early part of the twentieth century, significant investment has been made over the years to ensure that the company has always been in the forefront of technology.

WeaveMaster has enabled the production co-ordinator to maximise the machinery utilisation in the weaving shed and in doing so, greatly improve operational efficiencies.

Whilst remaining flexible in its use, the system offers a 'live' insight into production capacities and provides accurate forecasts with regard to product completion times.

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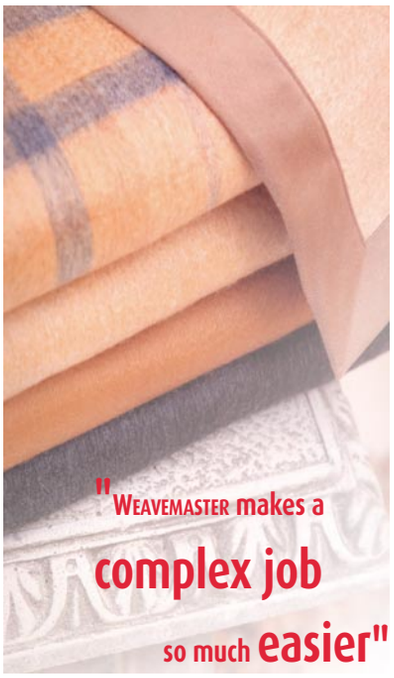
"Once our true operational efficiencies were established, the system has given us the ability to constantly monitor them and enabled the impact of improvement initiatives to be analysed."

Perhaps the most interesting and unique part of the installation is the electronic weft selection software that Barco developed specifically for Alex Begg. Since its inception, this part of the overall project has grown into what is now a very sophisticated system, which downloads designs directly from the company's design database straight to the loom. This effectively automates the entire weft patterning function in the weaving department.

Derek McGill, IT Manager, takes up the story. "We wanted to replace an outdated, problematic and Y2K suspect system from another supplier. It was supposed to be a combined monitoring and CAM system but it didn't do either terribly well. It was lacking in information on the monitoring side and wasn't able to give us the data we wanted. What we also required was a system that could download designs directly from our design database to the looms. It proved impossible to do this seamlessly, which meant we had to replicate the information. This took 30 minutes for each design and a further twenty minutes to download. Using the WeaveMaster system, the data goes automatically to the Barco server in no time at all and the accuracy has vastly improved."

The company looked at a number of systems before ordering WeaveMaster. "We were impressed with its ease of use. Being Microsoft Windows® based, it was familiar to us and that helped to shorten the learning curve. As well as giving us the data we wanted, we liked the way the information was presented on the planning board, which is automatically linked to our CAM system. Finally and most importantly, we felt confident with Barco and the expertise of their staff," he emphasised.



Production Coordinator, Lorna Yates stressed, "The WeaveMaster production planning software has definitely improved our efficiency, both in our daily production and also in being able to plan forward in the sure knowledge that we have the yarn. It also makes it much easier to add urgent jobs into the schedule, all of which ensure that we meet the delivery dates on time. Using a system of colour coding I can see at a glance exactly what is happening in real time. I can react very quickly by adding another loom when necessary or by putting together pieces of the same quality and size on the same beam. WeaveMaster makes a complex job so much easier and I can't imagine what it was like, not that long ago, when all the production planners had to rely on was their memory and experience."

About Barco:
Barco, an international company headquartered in Kortrijk, Belgium, provides visualization and display solutions for professional markets. Barco designs and develops solutions for large screen visualization, display solutions for life-critical applications, and systems for visual inspection. Barco has a network of subsidiaries, distributors and agents in almost 100 countries. Barco is quoted on Euronext Brussels and is a BEL 20 and a Next 150 company.

BarcoVision Ltd
Philips Road, Whitebirk Ind Est, Blackburn, Lancs, BB1 5SN
Tel:+44 (0) 1254 662244 Fax:+44 (0) 1254 582595
email: sales.dex@barco.com
Registered Office: Registered In England No 1501885

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