

Frequently Asked Questions:

- What are the different reasons that companies are looking to automate?
 - There are a number of drivers for companies. The primary reasons behind many automation projects include:
 - Labor shortage/expense/inconsistencies: across the country we are seeing labor shortages or a heavier reliance on inconsistent temporary laborers. This is very costly. Labor costs are also rising - minimum wage in many areas is now \$15/hour. The cost to operate a robot is about \$2-3/hour.
 - Safety: humans are still being asked to do a lot of dangerous, repetitive tasks. The constant bending and lifting creates strain on the bodies doing the work. People inevitably get hurt on the job, which also creates unnecessary costs and disruption to production.
 - Quality: human error is always present where humans work. Automation creates consistent pallets, products, shipments without taking breaks.
 - Increased Production: companies are always looking for increased production due to increased demand, better processes, new products, etc. Automation typically generates higher production, and allows the labor force to focus on more value-added tasks/responsibilities.

- What are some ways (outside of robotics) that companies are automating?
 - There are a variety of ways that companies are looking to automate. These include but are not limited to:
 - Conveyor automation - sortation, zero pressure accumulation, 24v, etc.
 - Robotics - palletizing, material handling, pick and place, machine tending, sealant dispensing, hard automation, etc.
 - Vertical Lift Modules (VLMs) - vertical storage carousels that store up to thousands of products or parts in a tower. Automated goods to person order picking
 - Case forming / Case packing - fully automatic case formation or packing
 - Automated Guided Vehicles - autonomous robots that move product throughout the warehouse
 - End-of-line packaging: methodologies are endless really. Automated strapping, coding, labeling, bagging, etc.
 - Updated Controls - control more equipment with better, updated controls

- Automation seems expensive, what sort of ROI do companies get from automation?
 - Return on Investment is dependent on what is driving the automation solution. Inconsistent labor? Safety? There are very direct ways to evaluate ROI: labor reduction, increased production and throughput, and quality improvement. There are some indirect considerations that should be taken into account as well, including waste reduction (in production, automated companies use less material), risk mitigation (injury prevention), and an improved work environment for employees. ROI is pretty easy to attain and can be realized in as little as 6 months in certain cases. Automation is more affordable than ever, and the gains from automation are significant.

- Do I have to spend millions to introduce robotics or automation?
 - No. The dollars involved completely depend on the complexity of the application. That being said, a robotic palletizer, for example, should start around \$200K to \$250K, which is extremely affordable. This should lend itself to an ROI of 1-2 years.
- What are the leads time associated with automation?
 - Completely depends on the project. Robot projects, specifically, tend to have longer lead time ~30-36 weeks is a good bar to set. Conveyor projects can be anywhere from 12-20 weeks. A VLM would typically be ~24 weeks.
- How is my employee base impacted with automation?
 - Front line operators will likely take on new roles. Instead of the repetitive, motion driven tasks they perform throughout the day, they will take on more “supervisory” roles in that they will need to look after the automation cells. This will in turn open them up to focus more on process improvement rather than process tasks. Automation will bring your production to new levels, so employees will likely find themselves taking on more responsibility at the business grows. There is a misperception in the market that robots replace people, but the reality is robots *repurpose* people. Employees get to use more of their brains instead of their bodies.
- What industries benefit from robotic automation?
 - There isn't really a sector that can't benefit from automation. Anywhere a person is handling a product or product is shipping out the door, there is a beneficial opportunity for robots.
- What are the different types of robotic automation?
 - Robotic opportunities are increasingly endless. Bottom line: anywhere a human is moving, storing, or lifting a product is an opportunity for robotics. Palletizing and de-palletizing are bread and butter options. Material handling, machine load/unload, high speed pick and place, sealant dispensing, and welding are all options for robots.
- How can I train my employees to use automation?
 - Prior to implementing a solution, it starts with a discussion. Understand the bottlenecks or pain points people are going through on the floor. It's important for them to know that automation doesn't mean replacing them - again, it's a re-purposing program. It should help everyone involved.
 - Once you have equipment implemented, a good integrator won't leave you hanging. RMH Systems trains all of its customers on the robotic cells. It isn't overly complicated, but it will require a champion or two from the end user. We will invite you offsite to our headquarters for dedicated training.
- We are looking to add our first robot, what's the best way to start?
 - Give RMH a call. We'll walk you through the process. It starts with a dialogue to understand the issues that you are facing and the goals you have for the project.

- **What should I be looking for in an automation integrator partner?**
 - **There's a lot of noise out there. At the foundation, you need a partner you can trust. Look for a partner that has experience. There are a lot of companies out there that are good at robotics specifically or conveyor specifically or packaging equipment specifically. Ideally, you'd have a partner that has expertise in each of those fields. Automation cells are directly dependent on the upstream equipment. If you choose a partner that doesn't understand that, you will run into problems. There will be additional vendors brought in, and finger pointing ensues. Another important factor is the vendors behind the integrator. You may trust an integrator, but if they have cheap vendors behind them, you won't end up with the right solution. RMH Systems represents the best, highest quality OEMs in the market.**

 - **RMH Systems prides itself on being a resource for our customers. RMH Systems has robotics, material handling, scales, and packaging engineers and sales people in-house. With RMH Systems, you have a trusted partner, and one go-to source for information, questions, and concerns. Not only can we implement the entire turnkey system, we provide training and aftermarket service. Any automation project requires a partnership between the integrator and end user. If you have an integrator that simply says "yes" without asking any questions, you may have issues down the road. The partnership requires questions, alternative thinking, creative, and openness. Your integrator needs to be able to lead you down the right path, not necessarily the perceived desired path.**