

# E & C EXCLUSIVE

## Variolution packages provide an extensive solution for all applications

Ten new Variolution packages - designed for use in applications such as materials handling, lifting systems, packaging and crane systems - can be specially modified for industry specific applications, writes SEW-EURODRIVE electronics division manager Norman Maleka.

Although Variolution packages have been available since last year, they will be officially launched at the Electra Mining Africa exhibition in September 2014, in order to provide high profile guests from across the globe with the opportunity to interact with product specialists from SEW-EURODRIVE, and to understand exactly how the Variolution packages work.

Variolution is essentially packaged selling whereby 80 per cent of the package is standard and 20 per cent can be customised. This provides local industries with a tried and tested standard solution that offers the added benefit of a certain degree of customisation. The main benefit is that customers are exposed to fewer outside variables during the process of setting up a new application.

Cost savings are another major advantage, as the project value of a Variolution package is the same as the purchase value of the individual components. In this case, however, installation and programming are standard, with the option of adjusting the package in order to suit the desired application, such as greater energy efficiency or hygienic design, for example.

Due to the fact that all components originate from one supplier, the customer is offered a 'one stop' solution and the accompanying cost benefit of such a deal. The Variolution packages are suitable for both large and small companies, as they can be used in a variety of industries.

Typically, the packages are not linked to a specific industry as they have multiple uses. The most common industries that these packages would be used in are; mining, automotive, food processing, the beverage industry, and the transport and logistics industry.

With reference to recent market trends, it has become evident that small to medium sized companies have adopted the Variolution packages in recent months. This is due to the expertise and skills offered by SEW-EURODRIVE, which makes it easier for companies who might be running a lean operation to be up and running quickly with their new application.

Through its Variolution packages, SEW-EURODRIVE also provides customers with onsite commissioning and installation, which is invaluable to companies where engineering skills are scarce. SEW-EURODRIVE conducts site visits in order to determine specific needs and to select a Variolution package that is ideally suited to the application. This service is also available telephonically.

### **Proven field capabilities**

SEW-EURODRIVE was recently contacted by A.A. Spring Makers - a Johannesburg-based specialist in the manufacture of quality tension, compression and torsion springs. The company requested a complete, yet simple and cost effective solution to replace its manual spring coiling process.

At the time, the process relied on an operator to produce a spring with a consistent number of turns and ends. A Variolution engineer proposed a solution to the customer consisting of a geared motor fitted with an absolute encoder, MOVIDRIVE inverter and drive operator panel (DOP).

The Variolution engineer wrote a customised IPOS program which allowed the operator to enter various physical properties of the springs to be manufactured via the DOP. With a touch of a few buttons, the solution performed the necessary positioning to manufacture the required springs.

Feedback from the customer revealed that the new Variolution package from SEW-EURODRIVE rectified a number of the previous system's shortcomings. Among the most notable was the fact that inaccurate start and end coiling was entirely eliminated, which ensured consistent spring ends. The new solution also ensured that the customer was able to coil springs in both directions, and in excess of 9,5 mm, which is well beyond the previous capability of just 7 mm in a single direction.

According to the customer, the number of rejected springs and overhead labour costs were both substantially reduced too. What's more, cycle times were improved as the need for individual spring inspection was entirely eliminated.

On a second site visit, the customer enquired whether it would be possible to include displaying the quantity of springs to be manufactured for a specific job and the number of springs completed during the manufacturing process. SEW-EURODRIVE was able to modify the software to accommodate the customer's needs on the spot.

Having witnessed the proven capabilities of the Variolution packages first-hand, the customer has subsequently contracted SEW-EURODRIVE to automate a second machine that manufactures a different product.

#### **Future outlook in the local market**

Variolution is clearly a new and innovative concept that helps customers to get more value for their money, and to draw on the strengths that SEW-EURODRIVE has gathered through repetition business in numerous industries.

Variolution packages from SEW-EURODRIVE are especially useful for mechanical and system engineers, with solutions optimised for many applications. System designers profit from SEW-EURODRIVE's years of experience and expertise in designing drive solutions.

The perfectly bundled scalable Variolution packages provide software modules tailored to the application and the drive technology used. In addition to a functional guarantee, the Variolution packages contain optimised order and delivery processes, as well as package specific documentation and component identification.

The possibility of combining the components and technology functions of the Variolution packages in a scalable manner allows for a high degree of flexibility. SEW-EURODRIVE offers predefined industry specific drive solutions. They are configured individually to meet specific requirements, which ultimately ensures a simpler, and more cost effective design.

Bearing this in mind, I am optimistic that the packages will be well received by guests at the official Variolution launch at Electra Mining, which is recognised as the largest mining, industrial, machine tools and electrical trade show in Southern Africa.

This in turn creates the prospect of SEW-EURODRIVE achieving measurable short term growth and success across a number of industries in the local market. SEW-EURODRIVE will be exhibiting at Stand \*\* in Hall \*\* throughout the duration of the Electra Mining event, which is being hosted at the Nasrec Expo Centre in Johannesburg from 15 September to 19 September, 2014.

**Ends**