

BELGIAN STAIR BUILDER TRAPPEN VERSCHAEVE IMPLEMENTS ROBOT TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY

The Belgian family company Trappen Verschaeve has been producing stairs for almost 60 years. With the production of more than 2000 stairs annually, they are one of the biggest stair builders in the region. The company is always on the lookout for new technologies and ways to become more efficient. Earlier this year Verschaeve purchased a robot, which is controlled by Compass Software.

Trappen Verschaeve was founded in 1960 by Daniël Verschaeve, who had nothing, but a bike and his toolbox strapped onto the back of it (www.trappen-verschaeve.be). Three generations later, the company is one of the biggest stair builders in Belgium.

The carpentry company started building staircases in 1970 since there was a great demand for stairs on the market and not many people with the skills for this job. About 20 years later, in the early 1990's, Verschaeve bought their first CNC machine, which was connected by the staircase construction software company Compass Software. Since then the company has been able to increase their annual staircase production from ca. 500 staircases to more than 2000, with numbers rising every year. Today, the company employs a staff of 30, operates 4 CNC machines, and as of recently, utilizes automated production via robotic loading.

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Saving Manpower and Creating More Capacity on Other Machines

About six years ago owner Jan Verschaeve and his sons Steve and Bjorn, were looking to buy their third CNC machine. They decided on an MKM 5-axis CNC with automatic table and were blown away by the ease of use and efficiency of the automation. Thus, as the next logical step, son Bjorn started researching automated loading via robots, to make the process even more efficient and easy. In early 2019 they finally made the leap and purchased their 4. MKM CNC processing center, equipped with a FANUC robot for loading. The machine and robot were installed and connected with Compass Software, who is also controlling their other three machines.

The new robot arm is loading plates for treads and posts onto the machine. Jan Verschaeve explains: “The biggest advantage is that we save manpower. During the production of posts for example, we always have to have a machine operator stand next to the CNC, since the posts have to be turned all the time. Then we need someone to load and unload the machine. Now, all of this is done by the robot and we can use our valuable staff for better production planning and creating more parts on the other CNCs.” Just like most manufacturers in the business, Verschaeve has a hard time finding skilled labor. By implementing the robot, they can increase production output with the people they already have.

Since the robot and machine work autonomously on treads and posts, the other three machines now have freed up capacity for other parts. Before, the company did not have the time to produce other parts, such as handrails, on the machines. Now, they can dedicate more time towards such projects, which increases the number of stairs they are able to produce in total.



As soon as it is certain that everything works 100%, the company wants to run the robot during night to increase production even more.

Bright Future with the Right Software Partner

For Jan Verschaeve, this new robot is already quite futuristic, but the father and son team wants to push the company forward and improve production processes all the time. Soon, they want to start manufacturing even more parts with the robot, such as risers and eventually

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even stringers. Additionally, once they have implemented the machine completely and are sure they can rely on it 100%, they want to run the robot during night to increase production even more. All of these ideas are discussed and facilitated with Verschaeve’s trusted software partner Compass Software. The staircase software specialist and the stair builder have been partners for almost 30 years already. During that time, they have built a trusted and reliable partnership.

“I can only recommend Compass Software to fellow stair builders. I am constantly on the lookout for alternatives on the market, but there is nothing better out there than Compass Software” Bjorn Verschaeve asserts. He explains further: “Our production is very close to the market demand, we only build what is needed right that moment, therefore, I need a software partner that responds quickly if I have problems or questions. Compass Software always comes up with solutions much faster than some of the other software companies we work with. They always seem to think ahead and when I come to them with a new problem or idea, they are usually already thinking about it.”

The German software company, who has been delivering innovative solutions for more than 30 years, has always been one of the pioneers in the stair building business and is always striving to solve hands-on problems before they even arise. They are known for their strong and personal relationships with their customers, a quality which three generations of Verschaeve stair builders value greatly.