

Next-Generation Bag **AND** Pouch Making Machines



Written by Nate Hendley

Launched in 2009, Modern Manufacturing Services, LLC of Farmington, New York builds machines that make bags and pouches for the flexible packaging industry and other sectors. The company utilizes cutting-edge technology, prides itself on stellar client support, and offers custom computer numerical control (CNC) parts machining as an ancillary business. This team wants to expand and consolidate its operations, and possibly open new branches in the future.

Made from film, foil, plastic, paper, or other materials, flexible packaging can be bent, folded, and shaped without breaking or tearing. Bags and pouches, two of the most common types of flexible packaging, are ubiquitous in the commercial retail sector. Machines made by Modern are used to create packaging

for coffee, pet treats, trail mix, sports protein powder, frozen vegetables, a breadth of other food items, and “anything that comes in a pouch, basically,” explains Regional Sales Manager Shawn Briggs. Outside of grocery channels, the company’s machines have also produced ration pouches for soldiers and medical pouches for doctors and dentists.

“We’re selling into the flexible packaging market, but we’re also targeting label manufacturers because they do a lot of digital printing and things like that. Our small platform Pacer machine is ideal for the digital print market,” Briggs says.

The company sells its products worldwide, with a particular focus on certain market niches. Stand-up pouches—that



is, pouches containing food or other items that can remain upright on their bottoms without support—are becoming widely popular, so Modern has responded to market demand.

The stand-up pouch industry “has been in double-digit growth for years,” Briggs tells us. “Everybody wants to reduce to reduce their carbon footprint; everybody wants to put their product in pouches and eliminate milk jugs, laundry detergent jugs.” Some detergent pods now come in pouches with a resealable closure.

Most work at Modern Manufacturing is self-performed, and Briggs estimates that roughly 95 percent of tasks are done in-house. The company does, however, use subcontractors for powder coating, rubber coatings, and programming controls platforms.

Modern’s core offerings include the Momentum-610, a stand-up pouch making machine which excels at short-to-medium runs and boasts ‘the shortest change-over times in the industry,’ according to company literature. The Velocity-610 is another stand-up pouch making machine with many of the same setup features as the Momentum-610, but is designed for medium-to-high-volume runs.

The Pacer-356—the product Briggs referred to—is a compact pouch making machine for short runs and digital printing applications. Other machines are used to make medical header bags and center seal bags.

The machines produce pouches in a variety of styles, with pouch configurations on the Momentum-610 alone including Velcro zipper, slider zipper, side gusset, and bottom load, among others.

As noted, Modern Manufacturing also does custom CNC work, owning roughly a dozen CNC machines—mostly mills but also some lathes, and all of them high-speed. Parts can be manufactured from stainless steel, cold rolled steel, or aluminum with extreme precision as the company can achieve tolerances as low as 0.0002 inches.

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Customers can either submit drawings of the piece they want or simply provide an old part, and Modern Manufacturing takes care of the rest. “If the customer has drawings, they submit the drawings, and we don’t do any design work. If they don’t have a drawing, if they just have an old part they need duplicated, we can reverse-engineer it,” Briggs explains.

The CNC segment serves a broader customer base than the flexible packaging equipment side of the business. “There are a lot of local companies that need CNC-machined parts,” says Briggs, “and we can make pretty much anything.”

Plenty of companies manufacture machines and offer CNC services but Modern Manufacturing stands out from the competition in speed, location, and price. “On our standard machine configurations, we offer about a two-week lead time,” says Briggs. “We are also located here in the States and have a fully staffed service department here in the States. So, we have a quick reaction time, and we are competitively priced against our competitors as well.” ▶▶

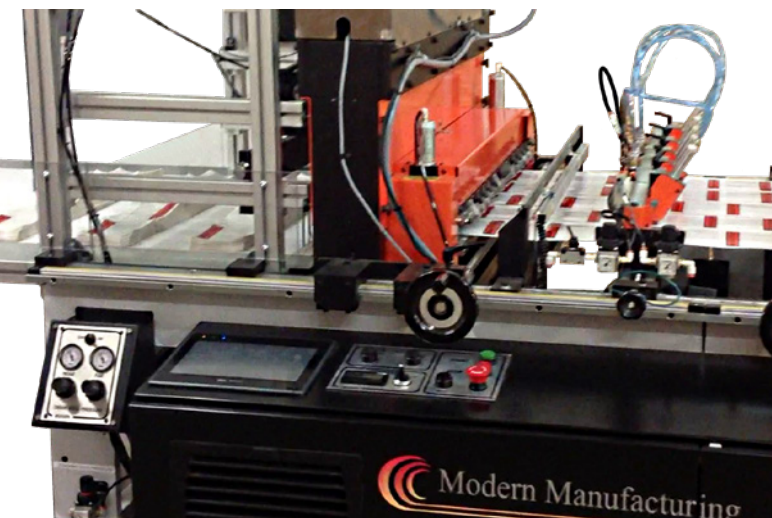




► The company also stays on top of technological developments and regularly introduces innovations to enhance productivity, efficiency, and ease of use. For example, machines made by Modern Manufacturing are semi-automated and feature Ethernet connections that enable operators to remotely monitor performance. “The owner can be at home and pull up a machine as he sits in his recliner at night and see what the production rates are and everything,” says Briggs.

In 2018, in Chicago, Modern Manufacturing introduced a solution called Inteliseal—or the Momentum Servo Inteliseal Stand-Up Pouch System—at PACK EXPO, a major trade show event for the packaging and processing industries. Inteliseal lets operators “control sealing head cycle distance, seal compression, and force. This new system includes seal head locators that enable operators to know precisely where the sealing heads are located. This allows for minor exact location movement as well as a reference point to be saved for repeat runs,” explains a Modern Manufacturing press release.

Developed by the company, Inteliseal offers Ethernet connectivity and greater operator control. The system is servo-actuated and features built-in settings that let operators select the features they require for a given film, pouch, or bag. Using Inteliseal reduces scrap and setup times and permits operators to run heat-sensitive films. Inteliseal is also “a much better system to maintain repeatability,” over other solutions, adds Briggs.



The company also conducts tests involving recyclable and biodegradable materials. Some flexible packaging materials are slow to decompose, so companies within the sector have been experimenting with eco-friendly alternatives. Modern Manufacturing maintains close relationships with the firms that manufacture film used in packaging materials. When these film manufacturers “come out with different materials, we’ll do test runs,” says Service Manager Mark Clark. “We run a lot of recyclable materials. We run compostable materials.”

While proud of its technical prowess, the company also places a strong emphasis on the personal touch and offers outstanding customer support. Onsite service, remote support, and operations manuals are all available, and Modern maintains a huge inventory of replacement parts, either made in-house or acquired from suppliers. Modern also stocks accessories such as pouch machine carriages and vacuum seal integrity testers.



“We communicate with our customers nonstop,” states Clark. “We are set up for troubleshooting. Most times, if a customer calls with a problem, unless it’s broken—the machine or the part—we can have their machines back up and running in less than 10 minutes.”



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“We’re constantly trying to come up with new designs to make things better and faster for the operators.”

Modern Manufacturing currently has around 50 employees, says Briggs, and is currently in expansion mode. To bolster operations at its primary 30,000-square-foot facility, it leases an additional 10,000 square feet of space in another building. “We’re going to expand on the existing building so we can bring everything under one roof instead of having two different locations,” says Briggs.

As for new hires, the company looks for potential workers with “a great attitude and drive,” he says. Modern does “a lot of in-house training,” to then bring workers up to speed, adds Clark.

To promote its products, Modern Manufacturing is active on social media and frequently attends industry trade shows. On top of PACK EXPO, Modern has a presence at the Global Pouch Forum. Founded in 1997, the forum is the “go-to event” for anyone involved in the development, supply, or purchase of flexible packaging materials including films, pouches, and machinery.

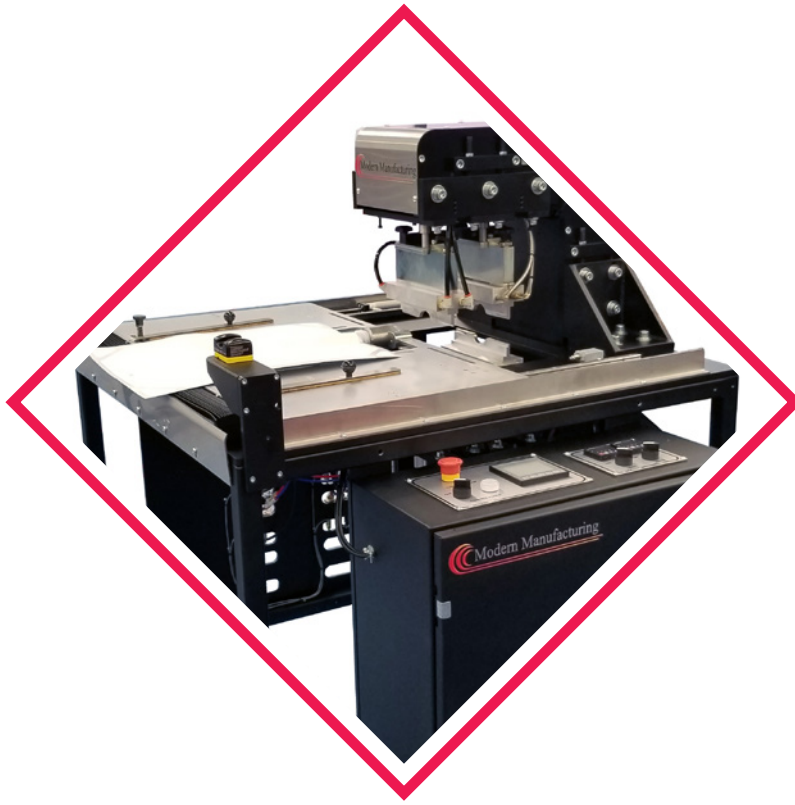
Briggs cites the economy as the biggest challenge facing the company at present, specifically interest rates. On top of this,

the ongoing U.S. presidential race has caused uncertainty about the financial and economic policies the federal government might pursue in the near future. “Historically in this industry, an election year is usually a down year for capital equipment purchases,” he says.

In light of such challenges, the company offers incentives to complement its excellent machines. Besides speedy lead time on standard pouch machines and comprehensive customer care, the team supplies some standard components free of charge. The company does “anything and everything we can do to keep the customer’s interest,” says Briggs.

Over the next few years, Modern Manufacturing aims to expand its CNC market and continue to enhance its bag and pouch making machines. “We’re constantly trying to come up with new designs to make things better and faster for the operators,” says Clark. “We’re not afraid to take a look at anything.”

“Five years down the road, we’d love to be the leading pouch supplier in the United States,” adds Briggs. ■



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