

The all-in-one solution

Shemesh Automation's XPander packing solution for wet wipes has been two years in the making.

Shai Shemesh tells **Sally Priestley** why the market needed an all-in-one machine offering top-notch packaging technology

Shai Shemesh, Head of Global Business Development at Shemesh Automation, admits he didn't anticipate his latest innovation in canister packaging, the groundbreaking, all-in-one XPander system, would take two years to go from concept to the market.

"I had the idea two years ago, but I'm not an engineer – I actually have a background in investment banking – and I honestly didn't anticipate it would take that long," he says. "It's taken two years of work to integrate all these functions and improved technologies into one machine."

And Mr Shemesh was keen to keep the entire process under wraps. "We ended up with this long project, and in that time it changed and evolved, but we kept it under the radar the entire time. We didn't want anybody to know about it – until now."

The new, fully automated canister packaging system was dreamt up by Mr Shemesh as a way of helping smaller wipe manufacturers

enter the market. He aimed to build on Shemesh Automation's industry experience supporting the wipes manufacturing sector with inline, high throughput downstream packaging options, and bring together all the company's proven technologies for the first time in a single application.

"We knew the market was ready for this machine because its development came about through continuous interaction with the market. We had a lot of feedback from smaller potential client customers that our machines were good, everything is great, but the throughput was too high for them, and they needed something smaller," says Mr Shemesh.

"The main thing about this machine is we are incorporating all the functions from our existing technology but with a smaller footprint and lower throughput."

"This is us facing the market and the market telling us what they need."

The big idea

The solution has been provided with the XPander, which processes 30-35 canisters per minute and offers filling, capping, sealing and stuffing functions all in a single line. It also offers in-built quality control and smart weight checking. The compact, mono-bloc design spans just 2 m X 2 m, making it ideal for fitting into smaller spaces and for saving energy.

Operated by as few as two operators, the

XPander allows for flexible and efficient operation which offers exceptional return on investment while reducing waste, cutting production times and maintaining high levels of product quality.

"We already have the ability to cover the whole range of functions, with 60/120/200 per minute solutions," Mr Shemesh says. "But here we have something for the entry level market."

“This is us facing the market and the market telling us what they need”

The concept has been launched under the Shemesh Automation Wipes (SAW) brand, an arm of Shemesh Automation, which offers turnkey round wipes line-up technology designed for producing high quality rolls of nonwoven wipes in canisters.

Starting out business in 1990, the company traditionally focused on core fillers, cappers, sealers and labellers for various industries. Over the last 15 years however, the Israeli business has shifted much of its focus and resources onto developing round wipes solutions, which are now used by wet wipes makers across the globe.

SAW now has a main wet wipes portfolio that includes canisters feeders, round rolls canisters stuffers, dozers and fillers, foil cutters and canisters sealers, cappers, continuous labellers, and canisters case packers. These are all available in various throughputs ranging from 30 and up to 200 products per minute.

With the XPander, however, the company has broken into genuinely new territory, and it's obvious this machine is the pride and joy of the company – and one which Mr Shemesh was keen to showcase at the recent launch event at SAW's UK headquarters, in central London.

Targeted companies from around the world were invited to see first-hand what the new machinery could offer. And the feedback was positive, with lots of support for the machine and potential orders already on the books. "We have a company in the US which is already looking at ordering 10," Mr Shemesh says.

"We could not be happier with the reaction we are getting from the market on this new-born baby. This is a direct result of continual evolution and constant dialogue with our customers, leading to significant productivity enhancements, benefiting manufacturers and boosting efficiency."

Regional focus

While there is potential to sell the XPander into all regions and textiles markets, Mr Shemesh is concentrating on Europe and the US as the two key areas most likely to be interested in the machine. "We had a lot of interest from Europe and US for smaller machines with a smaller footprint and a lower throughput. So we are mainly looking at these two markets."

Asked if he sees any opportunity to develop the product further, Mr Shemesh says efforts in the short-term will be on getting the message out about the XPander and what it can offer.

"This is absolutely ground-breaking to have all these processes in one application," he says. "I'm almost positive the XPander is the only machine of its kind available on the market today."

And he adds: "We have achieved everything we wanted to achieve with this machine, and the feedback from the market so far has been absolutely great. We've waited a long time to get this machine to the market and here we are now – and it's projected to be a great hit."



The XPander incorporates all functions of wipes packaging into a single machine



The new machine was developed to meet the needs of smaller wipes manufacturers