

Brewing With Tradition and Technology

VTScada Software Performs Batch Management and Quality Control for a Cutting Edge Brewery

Moosehead Breweries Ltd. is a family-owned business that prides itself on quality and tradition, a motto also found on the labels gracing its suds. This has helped make the New Brunswick-based company a world leader in the brewery industry. Another important reason for their success has been their commitment to cutting edge automation technology.

Founded by the Oland family in 1867, Moosehead's product lines now range from traditional ales to contemporary light beers. Their Saint John plant operates twenty four hours a day and has a daily capacity of over 12 million hectoliters.

In 1989, the brewery was experiencing difficulty controlling the temperatures in the cellars where the beer is aged. For example, cleaning one tank with hot caustic would cause a rise in temperature in the adjacent tank which contained aging beer. These great variances in temperature were making the process area too hot, and Moosehead needed a system to improve the control and sequencing of the cellar cooling units.

Their solution was to invest in a sophisticated automated control system that included programmable logic controllers (PLCs) to perform monitoring and control at key points in the process. Moosehead chose a software product called VTScada (then known as WEB) as the human machine interface (HMI) with these devices.

VTScada is developed by another Eastern Canadian Company called Trihedral. Their HMI and SCADA software products are used by thousands of customers on six continents including the massive automated potato processing facility operated by Cavendish Farms in New Annan, Prince Edward Island.

Moosehead's key criteria for selecting VTScada were that it did not require any retraining of their operators or reprogramming of their PLCs (programmable logic controllers). Trihedral developers achieved these objectives by creating screens that mimicked Moosehead's existing operator interface, which included an old-style membrane keypad. Operators were then able to manipulate the keypad within VTScada using a mouse, with only a minimal learning curve.

Moosehead was so impressed how well the automated system was able to control the cellar temperatures that it decided to install VTScada in its brewing department to replace older operator interfaces. The software application has since been expanded into the engineering, carbonating, fermenting and packing areas of the company, for applications such as batch management and quality control.



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