

Not Sitting Still

In building a new warehouse and production facility, 9 to 5 Seating had a simple but aggressive goal: create capacity to quadruple production in a new production and warehouse facility that is LEED Gold® certified.

The company is meeting that goal in its 100,000-square-foot building in Hawthorne, Calif., by using an innovative material handling scheme built on interplay between automated conveyors, a sophisticated order-picking system, a very narrow aisle (VNA) raw material storage system and highly efficient electric lift trucks chosen specifically for the process design.

Forward Thinking

9 to 5 Seating specializes in the design and manufacture of office seating for customers from major companies to schools and hospitals to "mom-and-pop" businesses. Through a combination of global and domestic production, the company offers customers an exceptional selection of product designs and upholstery materials.

All the products 9 to 5 Seating manufactures are made to order and ship in 48 hours. To increase production, the company joined forces with Raymond Handling Solutions of Los Angeles to design the handling system.

"We looked at many avenues and options before choosing Raymond Handling Solutions to help us design and implement the new facility," says Dara Mir, 9 to 5 Seating president. "We chose Raymond Handling Solutions for the level of service, experience and knowledge it provides. It was a one-stop solution that made implementation much easier based on Raymond Handling Solutions' depth of knowledge about storage."

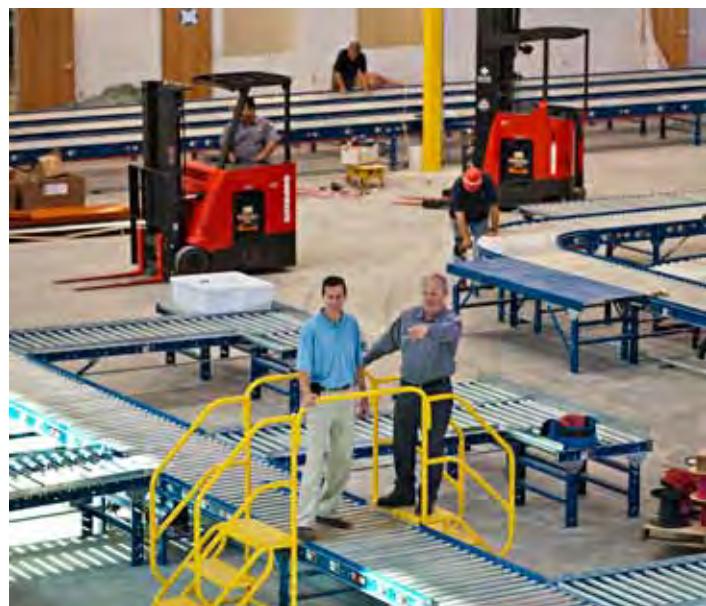
Smooth Flow

Raymond Handling Solutions, a Sales and Service Center of The Raymond Corporation, took time to fully understand 9 to 5 Seating's production flow to recommend and provide the ultimate process to optimize the new facility. Raymond Handling Solutions worked with the 9 to 5 Seating team to design a U-shaped material flow. The circulation consists of lift trucks receiving incoming raw materials and components, feeding the VNA racking system, delivering components to the pick module and moving finished goods to shipping.



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Raymond Handling Solutions

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Moving Through

In the handling scheme, raw materials and some finished components arriving at the dock are handled by operators on *Raymond*® Model 4250 stand-up counterbalanced electric lift trucks. To increase efficiency and turnaround time when orders for chairs arrive, *Raymond Swing-Reach*® trucks pick the necessary assemblies and components from the racking and either carry them directly to the pick module or stage them at the aisle ends for other trucks to deliver. For each individual chair, pickers in the pick module create kits that are placed in totes with different bar codes. The totes are sent down the conveyor line and are automatically sorted to the correct assembly stations. The handling process interfaces with the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system so company personnel can determine the status of a given order at any point in the process from assembly through shipping.

Once assembly is complete, a conveyor takes the chairs to the packing area. Workers use the counterbalanced trucks or *Raymond* Model 8400 pallet trucks to load the trucks. A *Raymond* Model 7400 Reach-Fork® truck stores and handles corrugated material for the packing area, and a *Raymond* walkie stacker works with a racking system that stores rolls of chair fabric.

Achieving Productivity

The company is achieving its aims to boost efficiency substantially in the new facility. Mir estimates that, in total, the handling process — including the lift trucks, conveyors and pick module — has increased productivity by more than 40 percent compared with the previous facility.

“One of our key goals was to reduce the number of touches per product, from receiving new incoming product from our vendors to storing that product to pulling it for actual manufacturing,” Mir says. “With the new design, we’ve been able to reduce the number of handling touches by about four.”

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