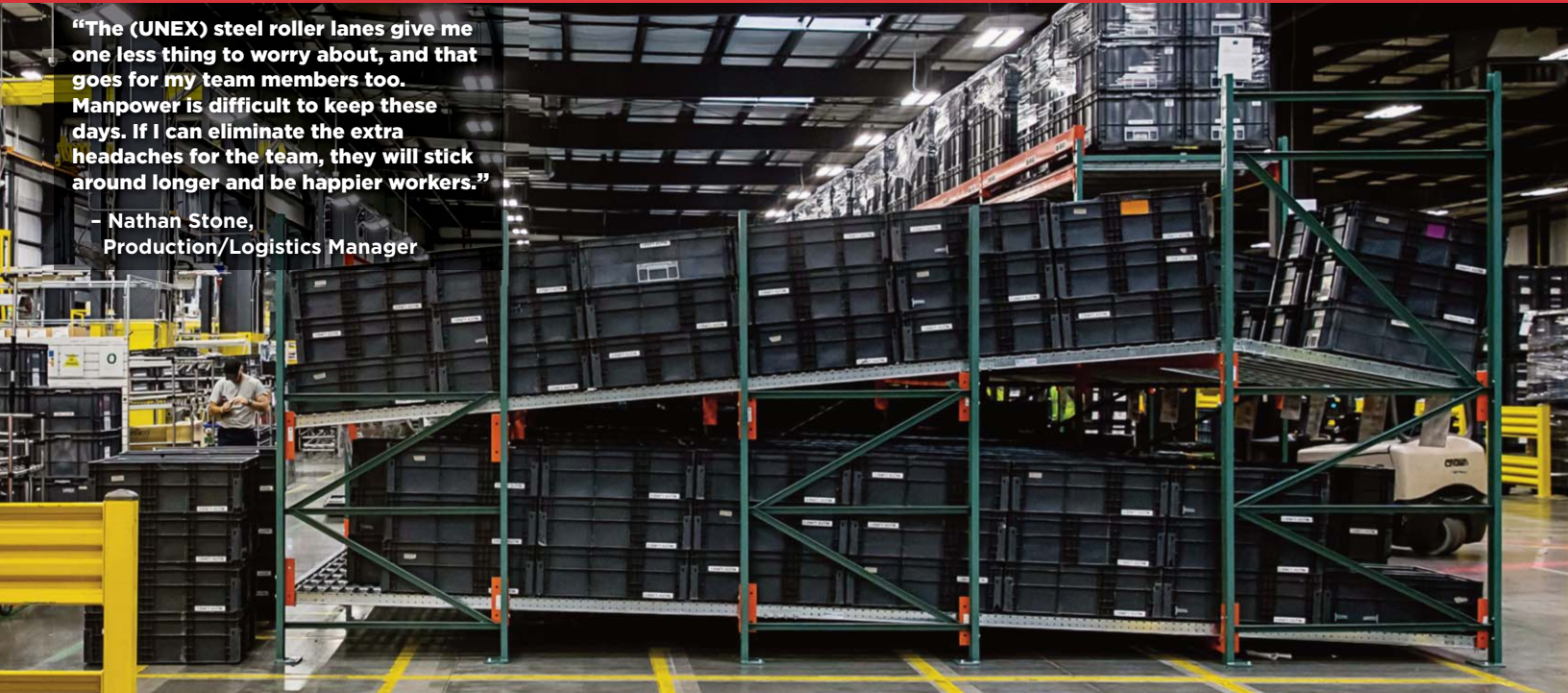


UNEX CASE STUDY

“The (UNEX) steel roller lanes give me one less thing to worry about, and that goes for my team members too. Manpower is difficult to keep these days. If I can eliminate the extra headaches for the team, they will stick around longer and be happier workers.”

– Nathan Stone,
Production/Logistics Manager



customer: Parts supplier for large automotive company

operation: Picking, assembling, manufacturing and shipping

goal: Modify carton flow area to improve flexibility, durability and safety

solution: Heavy duty SpanTrack steel roller lanes from UNEX



UNEX Steel Rollers Help Automotive Supplier ‘Knuckle Down’ and Continue to Deliver Parts on Time and on Track

A fast-paced facility is on a roll with an upgraded carton flow area equipped with heavy duty SpanTrack steel roller lanes.

Workers at a thriving Indiana facility deliver 6,500 parts each workday to a major car and truck manufacturer. “We are a just-in-time supplier and are constantly moving a high volume of automotive components of all shapes and sizes, from parts that go under the hood to under the body,” says Nathan Stone, Production/Logistics Manager.

Throughout each shift, empty and filled totes flow seamlessly across 38 bays equipped with heavy duty, galvanized steel rollers from UNEX. But this uninterrupted volley of carton flow was not always the case.

In Search of a Flexible, Durable Solution

A few years ago, Nathan and his team recognized the need for a major upgrade to the carton flow area. Components were changing, which meant totes were getting bigger and heavier. It was time to make significant changes to keep pace with the automotive industry’s ever-evolving demands.

“At the time, we were using skinny tracks with skinny rollers. The wheels were falling apart. Shafts and bearings were all over the floor. Totes were hanging up. Team members were climbing inside the lane to pull out the totes, and that was a safety issue,” says Nathan. “We needed a solution that could drop in easily, since components are always changing, and we had to find something durable, efficient and safe.”



Nathan met with Darrin Wicks of the Indoff Corporation, to redesign a new and improved carton flow area that could meet the facility's needs for years to come. Darrin is a UNEX distributor that has utilized the UNEX product line to help his customers improve their processes in many different projects.

"We modified the entire system to give the plant the flexibility to put heavy and large containers as well as small, light ones into the racks," says Darrin. "We selected the heavy duty rollers from UNEX, because they provided the versatility and durability we were looking for."

The team put a few lanes to the test. "They rolled better than we ever expected," says Darrin. After the rollers passed with flying colors, the team installed 652 heavy duty SpanTrack steel roller lanes across 38 bays. The installation was completed in one week during the plant's regular shutdown to avoid downtime at the busy facility.

"Overall, this was a massive project. We changed our entire storage system," says Nathan. "With the old system, if I had to change finished goods, I also had to change the conveyor beds. Now, all I have to do is move my signage and my totes. Moving things around and joining lanes together is so easy."

The Need for Knuckles

Inside the plant, totes filled with parts move at a steady clip as team members fill orders from the automobile maker. At the same time, empty totes are collected, refilled with parts, and returned to a top level. "The lanes with the newly filled totes are pitched, so height can be an ergonomic issue if our team members have to lift the totes too high and push them toward production," says Nathan.

To minimize over-the-shoulder lifting and to ensure the efficient flow of totes down the length of the lane, the UNEX team installed knuckles at rear-loading areas. The attachments create a bend in the track, which lowers the pick point. "We typically use the knuckles with light duty rollers," says Ryan McKinney, Regional Sales Manager, Central East, UNEX. "For this project, we customized the knuckles for the heavy duty rollers to make it easy for workers to load totes and to help meet the customer's ergonomic standards."

Tough and Organized

Nathan recalls that the previous rollers "were just not made for the abuse of a high volume of totes moving forward on a daily basis. The UNEX rollers are tough. We haven't had to do any repairs. The frames are solid."

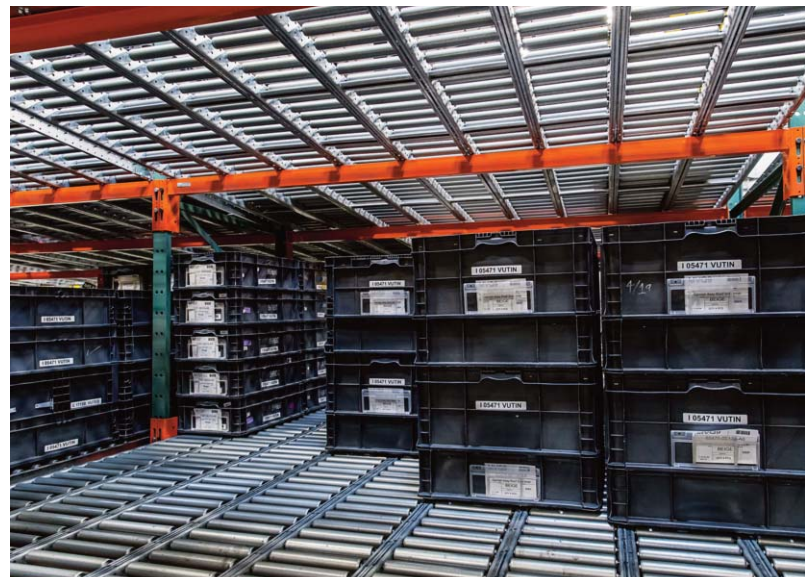
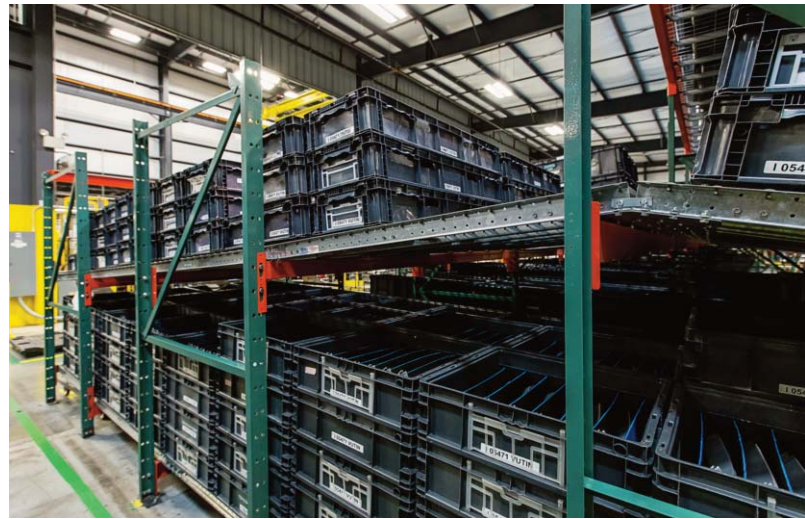
The all-steel full-width rollers with ball bearings allow for less slope, maximum carton support and help boxes and totes track straighter—features that are significantly superior to the previous system.

"If there's ever a concern about weight, customers should think seriously about using the steel rollers from UNEX," says Darrin. "These will be workhorses in the plant for a long time."

The UNEX solution also provides a clean, uniform look across the plant. "There are no gaps. Everything is butted together well. It's much cleaner," says Nathan. "When people walk in here, they are impressed."

'One Less Thing to Worry About'

The heavy duty SpanTrack steel rollers have been working well at the plant for months. But there is another benefit that Nathan thinks is also important. "The steel roller lanes give me one less thing to worry about, and that goes for my team members too. Manpower is difficult to keep these days. If I can eliminate the extra headaches for the team, they will stick around longer and be happier workers."



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